

Act IV.

ELECTRA.

Scene 1.



J. Roberts del.

Published for Dells British Theatre Oct 6th 1777.

Thomson's Sculp^t

M^{rs} YATES in the Character of ELECTRA.

*O dear memorial of my dearest friend,
Ye scanty Reliques of Orestes, Oh!*

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BELL'S EDITION.

LECTRA.

A TRAGEDY,

As translated from SOPHOCLES; with Notes,

By Mr. THEOBALD.

DISTINGUISHING ALSO THE

VARIATIONS OF THE THEATRE,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

Theatre-Royal in Dury-Lane.

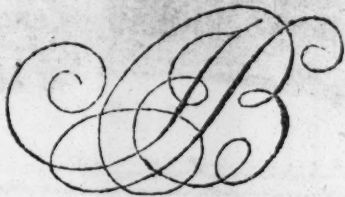
Regulated from the Prompt-Book,

By PERMISSION of the MANAGERS,

By Mr. HOPKINS, Prompter.

Ὡς ἂν δόλω κτείναντες ἄνδρα τίμιον,
Δόλω τε καὶ ληθῶσιν ἐν ταυτῷ βρόχῳ
Θανόντες, ἧ καὶ Λοξία; ἰφθίμωσιν,
Ἄναξ Ἀπόλλων, μαινίης ἀψευδής, τὸ πρῖν.

Æschyl. in Cœph.



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MDCCLXXVII.



T O

JOSEPH ADDISON, Esq.

S I R,

THIS poem presumes to throw itself at your feet, as a piece more wanting your protection, than worthy of your patronage. But it is as necessary for young authors, who should be conscious of their imperfections, to screen themselves under great names; as it has been always natural to criminals, to fly to a sanctuary.

Permit me then, Sir, more than to hope a shelter; to promise myself some reputation from this honour. Or, even should the world determine of my performance to my disadvantage; the satisfaction I take in being allowed the privilege of this address, yields me more pleasure, than their censure could give me pain.

But I am so far from entertaining any fears of its miscarriage; that if my own partiality and the judgment of those chosen friends,

—Quibus hæc, sint qualiacumque, arridere velim,

have not conspired to deceive me in its favour: I may presume, that little merit they are pleased to allow it, will be my best excuse for pretending, in this public manner, to declare myself,

S I R,

Your most obedient

Humble servant,

LEW. THEOBALD.

A 2

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

M E N.

	<i>Drury-Lane.</i>
<i>Ægysthus</i> , an usurper of the govern- ment of <i>Argos</i> , ———	Mr. Palmer.
<i>Orestes</i> , son of the late rightful king Agamemnon, by <i>Clytemnestra</i> ,	Mr. Smith.
<i>Pylades</i> , his friend, prince of Phocis,	Mr. Packer.
The Governor of <i>Orestes</i> , ———	Mr. Aickin.

W O M E N.

<i>Clytemnestra</i> , queen of Argos, late wife of Agamemnon, now of <i>Ægysthus</i> , ———	Mrs. Hopkins.
<i>Electra</i> , Agamemnon's daughter,	Mrs. Yates.
<i>Chrysothemis</i> , ditto, ———	Mrs. Baddeley.
Attendants of <i>Clytemnestra</i> .	
Chorus of young ladies of <i>Argos</i> .	

SCENE, before the Palace in *Mycenæ*.

T H E

E L E C T R A.

A C T I.

SCENE, *before the Royal Palace in Mycenæ.**Governor of Orestes, Orestes and Pylades.*

GOVERNOR.

O H, son of Agamemnon, (he who once,
 Supreme in power, led our victorious Greeks
 To Troy's destruction ;) hence may you survey
 The object of your long, your ardent wishes:
 Behold your native Argos ! here, the grove
 Of Inachus's wand'ring frantic daughter :
 And here, the fam'd Lycæan Forum stands,
 Erected to the glorious god of day :
 This, on the left, is Juno's awful temple ;
 Around the glitt'ring tow'rs of rich Mycenæ,
 With the dire house of bloody Pelops rise.
 Thence I receiv'd you from your sister's arms,
 Snatch'd from the fate in which your father fell ;
 I took, preserv'd, and nourish'd you till now,
 To grow the keen avenger of his blood :
 But now, Orestes, and you, Pylades,
 The dearest partner of his cares, betimes
 We must determine what our cause requires.
 For see, the chearful light begins to dawn ;
 The warbling birds salute the early sun ;
 And ev'ry star faints in his fuller glory.
 E'er then the busy search of jealous eyes
 Prevent, let's fix our counsels ; hasty time
 Cuts off all slow debate, and calls for action.
Orest. Thou truest friend that ever serv'd his prince, 25
 How does thy love to me shine out conspicuous !
 And, as the gen'rous steed when weak with age,
 Starts into rage, and scents the distant battle ;
 So you, though press'd with years, work up our souls
 To fame, and follow in the glorious chase.

A. 3.

30.
To.

To thee my purpos'd vengeance I'll disclose,
 Do thou with deep attention mark my words ;
 And where my youth shall err, with wisdom guide it.
 Know, when I went to ask the Pythian god 35
 What method I should take in my revenge,
 He thus in express terms spoke his high pleasure:
 Close be thy vengeance ; no loud force prepare ;
 But steal upon th' unguarded murderer.
 Therefore do thou, my venerable friend, 40
 As soon as kind occasion will permit,
 Enter the palace ; dive into their counsels ;
 And find out means for this our great attempt :
 For rev'rend age has plow'd thy features up ;
 And bent thee to the earth, that thou shalt pass 45
 Successfully unknown, and unsuspected.
 Then form a tale like this ;—that thou art sent
 From Phocis, from Phanoteus, to relate,
 (For he's their potent friend, their dear ally)
 Nor spare an oath to back the licens'd fraud 50
 And win belief, how poor Orestes perish'd ;
 Whirl'd from his chariot in the Pythian games.
 This be the sum and subject of thy errand ;
 Mean while, as the great Lycian god injoin'd,
 We, with oblations and devoted hair, 55
 Will please my father's shade, and crown his tomb.
 That done, here let us meet ; and in our hands
 Bear to th' incestuous court the brazen urn,
 Which lies conceal'd in yonder verdant thickets ;
 Thus by an artful fraud resembling truth, 60
 We may convince them of the pleasing news
 That I am dead ; that those are the remains
 Of my burnt bones, rak'd from the fun'ral pile.
 Why should I grieve to be reported dead,
 While I rise fairer from that death suppos'd 65
 To nobler life, to happiness and fame ?
 Nor can the tale which profits, prove disastrous.
 Oft have I heard of men, for wisdom fam'd,
 Revive and flourish from imagin'd tombs,
 To fresh renown, and more illustrious triumphs. 70
 So on my foes from death at once I'll rise,
 Glare like a meteor, and with terror blast them.
 But, Oh, my country, and ye genial gods,
 Receive me prosp'rous, and assist my purpose !
 And

E L E C T R A.

7

And thou, paternal dome, to thee I come,
Sent from the gods to rid thee of pollution.
Oh, drive me not dishonour'd from this land!
But fix me happy in my father's throne,
And make me but the scourge of usurpation,
I ask no more!——But now, my good old friend, 80
Support the task which thou hast undertook:
We, Pylades, will hence, time presses hard;
Time, on whose friendly call the issues hang
Of all our mortal actions.

Elect. Oh! my fortune——

[*Groaning from within.*]

Gov. Hark! sure I heard the voice of female sorrow. 85

Orest. Think you, 'twas not the poor Electra groan'd?
Say, shall we stay and listen to her anguish?

Gov. Not for the world:——Begin we from the god;
And his commands fulfil: with due oblations
Appease, invoke the manes of your fire: 90
From hence we shall the hop'd event derive,
And draw a blessing on the pious work.

[*Exeunt Orestes and Pylades at one door, Governor and Attendants at another.*]

S C E N E II.

Elect. [*Alone.*] Oh, sacred light, and, Oh, thou ambient air,

How have ye witness'd to my constant sorrows!
How have ye seen these hands, in rage of grief, 95
Harrow and bruise my swoln and bleeding bosom!
While each new morn was blasted with my woe:
How have the circling nights heard my despair!
How have my walls and hated bed been curst,
And echo'd to my still repeated anguish! 100
My sighs, my groans for my unhappy fire,
Whom barb'rous climes and cruel battle spar'd;
Whom battle spar'd, but whom my mother slew!
She and her partner of adult'rous joys,
Accurst Ægysthus, with a murth'ring axe 105
Splitting his temples, cleft the hero down:
Relentless, as the woodman does an oak.
And none, but I, or pities or complains;
None but Electra mourns for thee, Oh, father,
With

Without regard to shame or pity murder'd ! 110
 And I, while life remains, will cherish grief ;
 Each rising morn, and each descending night
 Shall hear my moan : for with incessant sorrow,
 Like the sad nightingale robb'd of her young,
 Before my father's doors I'll plaintive stand ; 115
 And my loud wrongs proclaim to ev'ry ear.
 Ye realms of Pluto, and his gloomy consort !
 Infernal Hermes ! You, my potent curses !
 And awful furies, daughters of the gods,
 Behold the great are fallen, unjustly slain ! 120
 And vile adult'ry stains the royal couch !
 Oh, rise, assist, revenge a murder'd king.
 Send me my brother, my Orestes hither,
 To ease my sorrows, and to bear his part :
 For, Oh ! I sink beneath the dire oppression. 125

S C E N E III.

Electra and Chorus.

Cho. Thou offspring of a most unworthy mother,
 Uncomforted Electra ! wherefore still
 Dost thou with streaming eyes and piercing groans :
 For ever mourn the fate of Agamemnon ?
 Indulge affliction, nor permit the space 130
 Of intervening years to wipe away
 The mem'ry of those snares and female arts
 That caught his noble life ? — Oh, may the man,
 If justice warrant my devoting prayer,
 That wrought his end, fall by the like surprise ! 135
Elect. Oh, gen'rous maids, and worthy, your high
 Kindly you come to soften my distress ; [births ;
 I know you do, to charm me into comfort.
 But, Oh ! I must be deaf to the enchantment ;
 Nor ever cease to mourn my wretched father. 140
 Therefore I must conjure you by our friendship ;
 By all your tender offices of love ;
 Let me indulge my tears, and be a wretch ;
 Nor urge me to remit my task of sorrow.
Cho. But yet, nor pray'rs nor tears, can soften death ; 145
 Or bribe th' un pitying Hades to unlock
 Earth's common prison, and send back your father.
 Yet, fond of woe and unavailing passion,

That

E L E C T R A.

That hourly wastes and preys upon your health,
You mourn the ills which mourning will not cure. 150
Why do you court immoderate sorrow thus?

Elect. They must be, sure, insensible and stupid,
That can forget a murder'd parent's death.
Let me be rather like the wailing bird,
The murmur'ing herald of approaching spring, 155
Who Itys ever, murder'd Itys, mourns.
Thee, Niobe, my heart esteems a goddess;
Thou monument of unexampled sorrow!
Lost to thy sex, and hardened to a stone,
Thou still art Niobe, and weep'st for ever! 160

Cho. Have you, Electra, only cause to mourn?
Are there not those have equal right to grieve?
Though you surpass them in immoderate transports.
How does Chrysothemis suppress her anguish?
And how Iphianassa bear her pain? 165
Or how Orestes droop in secret exile?

Elect. Happy Orestes, when the glad Mycenæ
Views him returning to his rightful throne;
Sent by the sweet direction of the gods!
Whilst I expect him with unwearied hopes, 170
Childless, and desolate, debarr'd of wedlock,
Dissolv'd in tears, and worn away with anguish.
But cruel he, regardless of my pain,
Forgets my love and ardent invitations:
Yet has he sooth'd me still with flatt'ring tidings; 175
Rais'd me to hopes, in vain, of his arrival;
Too credulous hopes; for, Oh! he will not come!—

Cho. Despair not, lady, for there reigns above
A potent God, that overlooks mankind;
To his directing hand submit your anger; 180
Nor let your transports swell to wild distraction;
Nor let your just resentments die forgotten:
For ling'ring time knows his redressing hour.
And he who stays on Crisa's verdant shore,
Great Agamemnon's son, back'd with the pow'rs 185
Of blood-avenging Erebus, will come;
Will come with fury, and redress your wrongs.

Elect. Much of my life has been already spent,
And fed on nought but unavailing hopes;
I can no longer bear the uneasy state, 190
An orphan, unsupported, weak, and friendless;

Us'd like a menial in my father's house :
 Robb'd of all rights of birth and princely state ;
 Clad in these homely weeds of wretchedness,
 And fed with offals from th' imperial table. 195

Cho. Oh, dismal was the welcome of his triumphs !
 Mournful return ! And, Oh ! that bridal room,
 To which the unsuspecting husband went,
 And met the sudden axe ! Accursed stroke !
 By fraud concerted, and by lust perform'd ; 200
 Adult'rous lust with treachery combin'd
 In horrid mixture for the horrid act ;
 Whether some god or man inspir'd the passion !

Elect. Oh, day most hated of the rolling year !
 Oh, blackest night ! And, Oh, prodigious griefs 205
 Which flow'd from that unutterable deed !
 When both their hands upon my father struck,
 To speak their union, and make murder sure.
 I too was struck, undone by that dire blow,
 And agonizing death lies heavy on me ! 210
 But may the great Olympian god, may Jove
 Repay their treason with still growing anguish !
 Let no short interval of gladness cheer them,
 But guilt and black remorse haunt them for ever !

Cho. No more such words of outrage ; call to mind 215
 From what a state of ease your rage has thrown you,
 And pull'd down woe by wilful provocation :
 Enough of sorrow has thy soul endur'd,
 By bearing up and buffeting the tempest.
 Believe it vain t' assail victorious vice, 220
 And tempt the rugged hand of tyrant pow'r.

Elect. Such treasons sure demand such loud complaints ;
 My heart is conscious of its swelling rage :
 Yet danger shall not scare me from this pleasure,
 But while I live, I will devote the wretches. 225
 From whom, ye dear companions of my grief,
 In such extremes of woe, can I endure
 The voice of consolation or advice ?
 Cease, cease your strains of unprevailing comfort :
 For never must my labours find an end ; 230
 Never must I have truce with my afflictions :
 But be a faithful wretch, and weep for ever.

Cho. Alas !—My love, like a fond mother, pleads.

E L E C T R A.

11

To calm your breast ; lest your distemper'd wrath
Should be the parent of still greater troubles.

235

Elect. Oh ! Can my ills admit of an increase ?
Can piety forget a father's murder ?

What men, what barb'rous nations, say it can ?
Oh, let me not be honour'd in their thoughts !

No : were I to be match'd to some such tame
Forgiving soul, I would not let the soft

240

Unjust infection, clog my tow'ring rage ;
Nor for a moment stop my shrill-tongu'd grief,
Which flies to gratify my father's shade :

For if my noble father unreveng'd,

245

Must moulder into dust, and be forgot ;

Whilst they, triumphant in their happy guilt,
Laugh at the lame revenge that cannot reach them,
Farewel to virtue ; let religious awe

No more restrain mankind, but outrage flourish !

250

Cho. In yours and in our own behalf we came,
T' express our duty, and assuage your woes :
But if our words displease your princely mind,
You must o'ercome, and we submit in silence.

Elect. I blush to think, that my uneasy load
Of grief, should seem immoderate or strain'd :

255

Forgive my strong necessity of sorrow.

What virgin, well-descended, could behold
Her father's wrongs, and not like me resent ?

Could see the never-fading ills I see,

260

That sprout each hour, and blossom on each other :

While from the hand of her who gave me life,

The piercing shaft is sent that wounds my soul.

And while within my father's injur'd house,

I am constrain'd to dwell with his assassins ;

265

Insulted by them, and oblig'd to take

The means of life from them, or yield to famine.

Oh ! what a life must you believe I drag ;

What tortures bear, distracted, when I see

Ægythus seated in my father's throne ;

270

Drest in the same imperial robes of state ;

And pouring forth oblations on that spot,

Where once the blood of Agamemnon flow'd ?

But, Oh ! what daggers must divide my soul,

When I behold the last great injury ;

275

The rude assassin in my father's bed,

And

And guilty mother's arms? If virtue suffer
 To call her mother, who with rank offence
 Has injur'd nature in her sacred laws.
 But she enjoys the wretch deform'd with blood, 280
 Nor fears the furies round th' adult'rous bed;
 But with a wicked triumph at the fact,
 Searches impatient for the welcome day
 Whereon my father fell: Oh, horrid thought!
 And when it comes, in wanton revels, plays, 285
 Feasts, dances, and with impious sacrifice,
 Thanks all the gods for the successful murder.
 While I, a forc'd spectator of their riot,
 (In mock'ry call'd the feast of Agamemnon)
 In secret mourn; nor am allow'd to vent
 The anguish of my lab'ring heart in freedom: 290
 For she, with watchful and ungen'rous hate,
 Eyes my distress, and thus upbraids my pain.
 Thou scorn of Heav'n! Have none but thou been griev'd?
 Art thou the only one whose father dy'd?
 Be trebly curst, and may th' infernal pow'rs 295
 Never release thee from the woe thou'rt fond of;
 Such is her language;—but whene'er she's told
 Orestes soon will come, then, then she raves,
 And bellows loud,—Thou source of all my cares, 300
 This is thy work, who stol'st Orestes from me,
 And nurs'd him up to be thy mother's ruin:
 But thou shalt pay the price of all my fears.
 Thus does she taunt; while her illustrious spouse
 Stands by her side, pleas'd, and provokes the contest: 305
 That trifling coward, that disgrace of manhood,
 Who only wars in consort with a woman.
 But while I wait to see Orestes here,
 To end my griefs and rescue me, I die!
 His vengeance sleeps by an unkind delay; 310
 Nor leaves me present hope or future comfort,
 To flatter woe, and keep my soul alive.
 In such a state 'tis hard to be discreet;
 And not accuse the unassisting gods:
 For in such ills our passions will transgress, 315
 Rise with our suff'rings, and like them grow boundless!
Chor. Tell me, Electra, is Ægysthus nigh?
 Who might, if he o'er-heard, resent my words.

Elect.

E L E C T R A.

13

Elek. Oh, think not I should taste these gentle freedoms
If he were nigh; but, guiltless of my joy, 320
He traverses the verdant fields of Argos.

Cho. With greater confidence I then shall speak;
Nor fear to ask the things I long to know.

Elek. Secure from danger, ask me what you please.

Cho. Then tell me of Orestes, will he come? 325
Or is there still a cause to keep him back?

Elek. He says he comes, but does not what he says.

Cho. Important actions move but slowly on.

Elek. I mov'd not slowly when I sav'd his life.

Cho. Fear not; his virtue will not fail his friends. 330

Elek. In that belief I have protracted woe.

Cho. No more — I see Chrysothemis approach;
Your sister, Madam, this way bends her steps,
And in her hands she bears sepulchral off'rings.

S C E N E IV.

Chrysothemis, Electra, and Chorus.

Chryf. Why will you, sister, at this public gate, 335
Repeat your grievance in such clam'rous accents?
Nor let experience teach you to discard
An impotent and unavailing passion?
Believe that I am conscious of our wrongs;
And would, if I had pow'r attempt revenge, 340
And let my strong resentment stand confess'd:
But when our weakness dictates to our wrath,
'Tis wiser to submit with lower'd sails,
Than to collect the storm and tempt destruction.
Thus would I counsel you to stifle rage; 345
Though I confess your indignation just;
But if or life, or liberty be dear,
We must obey and stoop to rugged pow'r.

Elek. 'Tis base that you, from such a father sprung,
Should in neglect of his forgotten worth, 350
Side with the faction of an impious mother:
For all your counsels are by her prescrib'd,
And speak her pleasure but at second hand.
Unheeding girl, confess, and chuse thy crime,
That thou, or know'st not, or forgett'st thy duty. 355
You said but now, if you had pow'r to hate,

B

To

To hate to purpose, you'd avow your anger;
 Yet when I struggle to revenge my father,
 Far from assisting, you obstruct my work.
 Is not this cowardice, or something worse? 360
 Tell me what great advantage would arise,
 Should I suspend my grief, and put on gladness?
 Do I not live, though ill the life I lead?
 Ill as it is, it is enough for me:
 Whilst ev'ry day I interrupt their joys, 365
 Contending still to please my father's shade,
 If the deceas'd are capable of pleasure.
 While you, whose words profess such specious hate,
 Act in concurrence with the murderers.
 But would they give me all my sister's gifts, 370
 And all the ornaments in which you shine;
 I would not yield a moment to them.—No:
 Let costly banquets load your wanton table,
 And your soft life in delicacies flow;
 Give me the meanest necessary food, 375
 The virtue which has earn'd, shall think it rich,
 And add a sweetness to the homely diet.
 I scorn the guilty honours you have purchas'd,
 And so should you in wisdom: but, Oh, shame!
 You court disgrace, and when you might be stil'd 380
 The glorious daughter of the best of fathers,
 You are the mother's, her distinguish'd darling!
 Thus at the price of censure, you betray
 Your friends, and sell the blood of Agamemnon!—
Cho. For Heav'n's sake, let not anger grow between
 you: 385

You both speak well, and both may be improv'd,
 If you will join, and by each other profit.

Chry. This language I am us'd to, friends, from her,
 Nor had I now provok'd the repetition,
 But that I heard an evil threaten her, 390
 Which would at once end these incessant wailings.

Elect. Name it; and if you can pronounce an horror
 Greater than these I feel, I will obey you.

Chry. Take then the sum of what I can inform you:
 Unless you calm these passions, they resolve 395
 To force you hence, where you shall ne'er behold
 The cheerful light of day, but lie confined

In some damp gloomy subterranean prison,
Far from this country ; there to groan unheard,
And breath your sorrows 'midst unwholsome vapours. 400
But, Oh, be wise ; prevent the threaten'd woe ;
Nor blame your sister, who with early care
Would labour to divert th' unripe destruction.

Elect. And have they then determin'd thus against me ?

Chry. As soon as e'er Ægythus shall return. 405

Elect. Oh, may the threaten'd mischief wing him hither !

Chry. What horrid wish is this, unwary maid ?

Elect. That he would come and execute his malice.

Chry. Ha ! Are you lost to sense ? What would you aim at ?

Elect. That I might fly from all of you, as far 410
As earth has bounds. ———

Chry. ——— Respect you not your life ?

Elect. This life is wond'rous beautiful indeed,
Fit to be car'd for !

Chry. — Were you wise it might.

Elect. Teach me not, sister, to betray my friends.

Chry. I teach you not, but to obey superiors. 415

Elect. 'Tis yours to flatter, I have no such soul.

Chry. 'Tis prudent not to throw our lives away.

Elect. But glorious to resign them for a father.

Chry. Our father would not wish us to pursue
Revenge at that rash hazard ———

Elect. ——— Cowards only, 420
And fearful souls, applaud such tim'rous maxims.

Chry. And will you not be caution'd 'gainst affliction ?

Elect. No : for I would not quite forego my reason.

Chry. Then I have done, and will pursue my orders.

Elect. What orders ! — And to whom these fun'ral
rites ? 425

Chry. The queen enjoins me on my father's tomb,
From her to make libations.

Elect. ——— How ! from her ?
To make libations to that hated man ?

Chry. To him she kill'd, for so you would infer.

Elect. By whom persuaded, whose advice was this ? 430

Chry. 'Tis the result of a nocturnal fright.

Elect. Oh, all ye gods of Argos, aid me now ! —

Chry. What grounds for hope derive you from her fears?

Elect. Tell me the vision, and I'll then resolve you.

Chry. Alas ! I know but little——

Elect. —— Tell me then

435

That little !—— Little sentences and words

Have often rais'd, and ruin'd men as oft.

Chry. 'Tis whisper'd, that she saw our father come

Again to light, and seem'd once more his wife :

That he took in his hand the regal scepter,

440

(Which once he bore, but now Ægythus bears)

And fix'd it in the earth ; when strait there sprang

From it a thriving branch, which flourish'd wide,

And over-shadow'd all Mycenæ's land.

This did I learn from one who was at hand,

445

When to the rising sun she told her vision,

To deprecate it's omen. More I know not,

But that these rites are owing to its horrors.

Elect. Now I conjure you, by our genial gods,

Obeys me ; fall not into rash offence ;

450

But, e'er it be too late, avoid pollution.

And, dearest sister, let no part of those

Design'd oblations touch my father's tomb ;

For 'tis not just, to bring his injur'd shade

Unhallow'd off'rings from an impious hand :

But give them to the winds ; or hide them deep

455

In earth, at distance from his awful tomb.

Let the earth keep them for her fun' al honours,

The fittest off'rings to adorn her grave.

Had she not been the vilest of her sex,

She would not sacrifice to him she slew.

460

How do you think his injur'd ghost will bear

To taste the off'rings which are sent by her ;

Who, not content to rob him of his life,

Mangled and hack'd him to disarm resentment ;

And strove to wipe th' abomination off.

465

Will impious off'rings satisfy for murder ?

And weak libations purge the guilt of blood ?

No ; fling th' offensive sacrifice away ;

And from our heads let each present a lock

Of supplicating hair : too mean the gift !

470

But all I have to give, except this girdle ;

Which take, however plain and unadorn'd.

Prostrate,

ELECTRA.

17

Prostrate, invoke him to arise from earth ;
 To come propitious and destroy our foes ;
 And send Orestes, with avenging force, 475
 To strike the hostile tyrants to the earth :
 Then shall we richer sacrifices pay,
 And crown his ashes with more grateful off'rings.
 My heart suggests, the care of our revenge
 Employs his ghost, and sent the hideous dream : 480
 Therefore, my sister, aid the gen'rous work ;
 The cause of you, and me, and that dear man,
 Our common parent, who is now no more.
Cho. The virgin speaks with piety, and you
 In wisdom should perform the dutieous office. 485
Ch.y. I will : for 'tis a vain and senseless strife,
 For two to differ in a work that's just,
 And asks dispatch. But now that I consent,
 By Heav'n ! you must be silent, friends ; for if
 M' enraged mother should discover ought, 490
 I might have cause to mourn the bold attempt.

[*Exit Chrysothemis.*]

SCENE V.

CHORUS.

Electra remains on the stage while the Chorus sings.

L.

Cho. Or my prophetic soul mistakes,
 Or I in hope from reason err ;
 Or vengeance swift advances makes,
 Upon the conscience-haunted murderer. 495
 Daughter, she comes ; she comes away
 With pow'r and justice in array ;
 I'm strong in hope, the boding dream,
 The herald of her awful terrors came.
 The king's resentments shall not cease, 500
 Nor shall he bury wrongs but in redress.
 The vengeful axe that gave the impious blow,
 Mindful of th' imperial woe,
 To hell and heav'n calls out aloud
 For retribution, and for blood.

B 3

505
The

II.

The brazen-footed fury shall appear
 With hundred feet, and hundred hands;
 To execute her fell commands,
 Who yet conceals her wrathful spear.
 Unseen she does her future work survey, 510
 And hovers o'er her unsuspecting prey.
 For impious acts have stain'd the royal bed;
 Acts at which Hymen stood dismay'd,
 While by concerted guile betray'd
 To give adult'ry scope, the husband bled. 515
 But I, in hope, foresee some dire event,
 The threat'ning visions of the night
 Shall have their force, nor be content
 To punish guilt with bare affright.
 Let birds, dreams, divinations lose their force, 520
 And solemn oracles no more discourse;
 If this appearance passes hence
 Without an happy consequence.

III.

Oh, inauspicious chariot-race,
 Which love-instructed Pelops won; 525
 What mighty mischiefs hast thou done,
 To this ill-fated place?
 For e'er since Myrtilus was thrown
 Headlong from the chariot, down
 The promontory's horrid brow 530
 Into the suffocating furge below;
 Unnumber'd evils have befall'n the state;
 And Argos felt successive storms of fate.

END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT

E L E C T R A.

19

A C T II. S C E N E I.

Clytemnestra, Electra *and* Chorus.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

YOU'RE free, you think, and now may walk at large,
 Because you know Ægysthus is not here ;
 Who would confine your walks, not let you range,
 To vent your spleen, and execrate our friends.
 But in his absence you regard not me ; 5
 I am the theme of your unmanner'd railings ;
 You brand me with injustice ; say, I'm fierce,
 And play the tyrant over you and yours.
 But I abuse you not ; I only pay
 Your handsome compliments to me in kind ; 10
 And, first insulted, but return reproach.
 And still your father is the stale pretence,
 As if I murder'd him : I did, I own it ;
 I own I did it ; and 'twas bravely done.
 Justice commanded, and I gave the blow ; 15
 And you, if wise, had help'd the glorious work :
 For he whom you so obstinately mourn,
 Murder'd your sister ; he, of all the Greeks
 Could find a daughter for a sacrifice,
 And bore to see her butcher'd. Cruel man ! 20
 A stranger to the pangs of bleeding nature,
 Nor conscious of the pains a mother feels.
 And then, for whom was this fair victim slain ?
 Was it for Greece ? You will not surely say it ?
 Had Greece the liberty to kill my daughter ? 25
 Or was't not for his brother Menelaus ?
 (Oh, justly did he die, who kill'd my child !)
 Had not his brother children of his own ?
 'Twas juster far they both had dy'd than she ;
 Both for their father and their mother dy'd, 30
 On whose account alone the war began.
 Or did the partial God of Hell prefer
 My daughter's blood to any second victim ?
 Or had your execrable father lost
 A parent's love, but Menelaus not ? 35
 Do not these acts proclaim him rash and impious ?
 Whate'er you think, my censure has condemn'd him ;
And

And so would injur'd Iphigenia too,
 Could the departed speak, accuse her father.
 I do not then repent of what I did ;
 But if you think I ought, take heed you speak
 In terms of calm respect, and urge your reasons.

40

Elect. You cannot plead that you were now provok'd,
 And therefore did retort opprobrious language.
 But might I be permitted, I would try
 To plead my father's cause, and sister's too.

45

Cy. You may : and did you always thus address me,
 'Twould spare you that reproach you murmur at.

Elect. First, you confess that you my father slew ;
 And can there be a blacker crime than this ;

50

The cause be just or no ? But that it was not,
 I'll shew you ; drawn by your adult'rous love,
 Not for your daughter, but your present spouse,
 You did the action. Ask Diana why,

Why she delay'd so long the courted winds ?
 Or what the goddess will not, I will tell you.

55

'Tis said, my father, sporting in her grove,
 Put up a noble-spotted branching stag ;
 And as he chas'd and slew the glorious prey,
 In triumph utter'd some unhappy word.

60

The goddess, to revenge th' insult, detain'd
 The fleet in Aulis, till my wretched sire
 Should make atonement with his daughter's blood.

Thus fell she ; nor could any meaner bribe
 Purchase a wind to swell their flagging sails ;
 For which, and not for Menelaus's sake,

65

With struggling sorrows and reluctant pangs,
 At last he yielded to the sacrifice.

But had he done it for his brother's sake,
 Should you have kill'd him therefore ? By what law ?

70

Take heed, lest you repent the rules you make ;
 By your own laws yourself will stand condemn'd :

If murder must with murder be repaid,
 Justice will tell you, you are next to bleed ;

Thus ev'n your own defence was turn'd against you.

75

But tell me, if you can, on what account

You now persist in execrable guilt ?

Why have you commerce with the bloody wretch,
 Who was th' abettor of your horrid crime ?

Why propagate by him a lawless brood,

80

And

E L E C T R A.

21

And banish far into another land
 The virtuous offspring of your husband's bed?
 Can this be reconcil'd? Or will you say
 These are the farther proofs of your revenge?
 'Tis base to say it; it can ne'er be good 85
 To wed a traitor for a daughter's sake.
 Yet, deaf to just reproof, you spurn at counsel;
 Cry, that 'tis insolence t' upbraid a parent;
 And shoot with all the arrows of your tongue.
 I have a mistress, not a mother in you, 90
 Oppress'd with hardships, and condemn'd to all
 That you and your curs'd consort will impose.
 Nay, scarce my brother did escape your rage;
 Who wears out wretched life in anxious exile.
 The saving whom you oft upbraid me with; 95
 And say, I nourish a revenger for you!
 And be assur'd, I wanted not the will;
 Therefore proclaim me to the world at large;
 Brand me with impudence; call me foul railer;
 The signal characters shall make me known, 100
 And mark me out for Clytemnestra's daughter!
Cho. I see, her fierce resentment blazes high,
 Regardless whether reason rules her anger.
Cly. And what regards can she receive from me,
 Who thus upbraids and vilifies her mother? 105
 Presumptuous wretch!—Believe you not, my friends,
 She has forgot to blush at any action?
Elect. Oh, you mistake!—I blush at what I do;
 And am too sensible the words I speak
 But ill become my station, age or fortunes; 110
 But your vile actions and malignant soul
 Have forc'd me to be rude against my will;
 For evils spring and flourish by example.
Cly. Injurious railer! do my actions teach,
 Do they instruct your tongue to grow offensive? 115
Elect. 'Tis your offence that speaks; you do the things,
 Which done, in proper language must be told.
Cly. Now, by Diana, when Ægysthus comes,
 You shall not thus insult me unreveng'd.
Elect. You rob me of the liberty you gave; 120
 You bade me speak, but will not hear with temper.
Cly. Will you not suffer me to make oblations,
But

But interrupt with inauspicious words,
Because I bade you speak?

Elect. Go on, perform

Th' intended rites; I will no longer stop
The meritorious office, but be silent.

135

Cly. Then list thou up the suppliant fruits on high;

[*To her Attendant,*

Which, offer'd to the sacred God of Day,
Shall free me from the fears which now I bear.

Oh, Phoebus! thou, whose hallow'd image stands

130

Before this palace, hear my hidden sense;

I speak not among friends, nor is it safe

Here to unfold the secrets of my heart

Before thy radiant light, when she is by;

Lest with her envy, and her babbling tongue,

135

She spread the story over all the city.

But hear me thus—The vision of last night,

The doubtful dream, which sleeping I beheld,

If it be prosperous, Oh, Lycian King,

Fulfil and ratify its kind intents;

140

If ill, turn all its horrors on my foes;

Nor prosper those who would disturb my state,

And plot in private to undo my pow'r.

Thus let me always live, from danger free,

And rule this kingdom and this house as now;

145

Join'd to those friends to whom I now am join'd;

Still crown'd with bliss, and with such children who

Nor hate, nor enviously disturb my joys.

Grant this, Apollo, and look down propitious;

Grant this, and in the manner which I ask:

150

The rest thou know'st, altho' I speak it not;

For gods have pow'r to read our inmost thoughts,

And nought is hid'd from the sons of Jove.

SCENE II.

Governor, Clytemnestra, Electra, and Chorus.

Gov. Ye virgins, may a stranger hope to learn,
If this tall fabric be the royal palace?

155

Cho. It is.

Gov. — And this the Queen whom I behold?
Her dress and person speak th' imperial rank.

Cho.

Cho. You're right; 'tis she.

Gov. ——— Then hail, Oh, Queen! I come
To bring you and Ægysthus grateful news
From one who is your friend.

Cly. ——— I embrace the news ——— 160
But next inform me from what friend you come.

Gov. From Phocis, from Phanoteus, to relate
A business of concern ———

Cly. ——— Pronounce it, stranger;
The man you come from speaks the errand good.

Gov. To sum up all, Orestes is no more. 165

Elec. Ah, wretched maid! it brings me to the grave.

Cly. What said you, stranger? Listen not to her.

Gov. I say again, Orestes is no more.

Elec. I perish with him, and am too no more!

Cly. At distance howl! ——— But, stranger, you pro-
ceed. 170

Instruct us in the manner of his fate.

Gov. To this was I employ'd — Know, mighty Queen,
When young Orestes at the plains arriv'd,

Where Grecia celebrates her Pythian games;

Soon as the herald's shrill-proclaiming voice 175

Summon'd each champion to the noble sports,

He enter'd the broad lists, bright as a god,

The admiration of the throng'd spectators!

'Twere endless to recount the things he did;

Thro' all the stated course of games he ran, 180

And bore in triumph ev'ry prize away.

The happy youth was hymn'd by ev'ry tongue;

Proclaim'd aloud by th' herald's voice an Argive,

By name Orestes, Agamemnon's son,

The General of Greece! — And thus he flourish'd. 185

But when the gods oppose the mightiest man,

The mortal sinks beneath th' unequal match!

For when the next succeeding morn arose,

Changing the nature of the lusty contests;

Orestes with the rival troop advanc'd, 190

And sigh'd for conquest in the chariot-race.

But Fate decreed not so; for when his steeds,

True to his hopes, successful wing'd their way;

And almost crown'd him with the promis'd prize:

Turning the goal with a mistaken breadth,

195
He

He struck unwary on the outmost column,
 And broke his axle short—He, with the shock,
 Fell from his seat, and in the twisted harness
 Intangled hung—Him, thus precipitate,
 The frighted horses, with confusion wild, 200
 Dragg'd to the middle course. With yells and shrieks
 The plying crowd beheld, and mourn'd the youth,
 Fall'n from renown, and lost to future conquests !
 Now dash'd against the ground, and now aloft
 Rebounding furious ; till the charioteers 205
 (But, Oh, too late !) stopp'd his unruly steeds,
 And loos'd him, with unseemly wounds deform'd,
 Torn, bruise'd, disfigur'd, and no longer known
 To be Orestes, by his dearest friends !
 Some Phocian men, appointed to the task, 210
 Strait burnt his body, and have brought, inurn'd,
 His dust, the poor remains of all his greatness,
 To find a tomb in his paternal soil.
 Such was his death ; how terrible to hear !
 But, Oh, how more afflicting to the sight ! 215
 The worst of spectacles these eyes have seen.
Cho. Alas ! alas ! then all my master's race
 Are perish'd, rooted up, and quite extinguish'd.
Ch. Oh, Jove ! what news is this ? Of joy, or horror ?
 That crowns with safety, yet with sorrow wounds ;
 Whilst to assure my life, I lose my son. 220
Gov. Why does the present story make you sad ?
Ch. I feel the mother struggling in my soul.
Gov. Vain and unwelcome then is this my labour.
Ch. How vain, or how unwelcome ? Since you come 225
 To bring me certain tokens of his death,
 Who, tho' my son, and nourish'd from my breast,
 Yet who forsook me, like a vagrant fled,
 And chose a stranger's for his mother's house ;
 Who never saw me since he left the land ; 230
 But, branding me with parricide, he still
 With rebel menaces has stabb'd my peace.
 I scarce have slept by night, or wak'd by day,
 Secure or pleasant ; but each anxious minute
 Seem'd but a short reprieve from instant death. 235
 But this kind morn disburthens me of fear,
 From him, and her ; from her, the greater p'ague !
 Because

ELECTRA.

25

Because domestic, in my bosom warm'd,
Th' ungrateful serpent sucks my vital blood.
But hurt no longer by her taunting malice,
My easy life shall flow with pleasure on.

240

Elect. Wretched Electra!—Now it's time to mourn
Thy fate, Orestes, when thy mother triumphs
In thy destruction thus—Gods! is it well?

Cly. With him 'tis wond'rous well, tho' not with
thee.

245

Elect. Avenging goddess, hear her contumelies!

Cly. She has already heard, and well determin'd.

Elect. Ay, now insult; your joys indeed are full.

Cly. And can Orestes help to make them less?

Elect. No; we must drop our unperforming anger.

250

Cly. Oh, stranger, you, indeed, deserve our love,
If you have silenc'd her malignant clamours.

Gov. My task is finish'd; I may now depart.

Cly. Not so, my friend; it would dishonour us,
And him that sent you, thus to let you go.

255

Enter the palace, and let's leave this railer

To howl abroad, and spread her stubborn grief.

[*Exeunt Clytemnestra, Attendants and Governor.*]

SCENE III.

Electra and Chorus.

Elect. Had she the marks of sorrow? Did the wretch
Confess despair, or like a mother mourn?

But with malignant pleasure stalk'd away!

260

Dearest Orestes, how hast thou undone me!

Thy fate has kill'd me, ravish'd all the hopes

On which my soul had fix'd her last support,

That thou would'st one day come, and with thy hand

Revenge my father and unhappy me!

265

Now where shall I retreat, forlorn, depriv'd

Of thee, and of my father? Now again,

I must be dragg'd to serve the cursed men

Who kill'd my father. Can sweet Heav'n permit?

No, by the gods, I will no longer dwell

270

Beneath the hated roof which covers them:

But here on earth will make my humble bed,

And mourn, till life is worn away in sadness.

C

If

If I'm a torment, let them kill me strait;
 For I am sick of life, and fain would die:
 When life is irksome, death is a relief.

275

S C E N E IV.

Electra joins in the Chorus.

I.

Cho. Does not Apollo see? Will Jove not hear?
 When will it thunder, if it now be clear?

Elect. Alas! my fate——

Cho. Why weep'st thou so?

Elect. Oh!——

Cho. Soften thy tumultuous woe.

280

Elect. You kill me if you stop my grief.

Cho. How?

Elect. ——By teaching vain relief.

By offering comfort to restore,

When he in whom I hop'd is now no more.

By such unavailing care

285

Y' insult my griefs, and aggravate despair.

II.

Cho. The fate of Amphiaraus know,
 By female avarice betray'd:

A victim to his wife's persuasions made:

But now the monarch in the shades below——

290

Elect. Oh, killing thought!

Cho. ——Immortal reigns;

A prophet in th' Elysian plains.

Elect. Woe on the cause!

Cho. Ay, woe, indeed,

On th' accursed matron's head!

295

Elect. But she too late her treason rued.

Cho. I grant, revenge her crime pursued.

Elect. That injur'd monarch found a son

His discontented shade t' appease;

But my unhappy fire has none

To give the plaintive phantom ease.

300

III.

III.

Cho. Oh, virgin, great is thy distress!

Elect. Too well I know

The weight of my oppressing woe;
Of griefs successive, long, and numberless!

Cho. With justice you of misery complain. 305

Elect. Therefore no longer wound my ear
With Comfort's voice; nor hope to cheer
My soul, that ne'er shall taste again——

Cho. What say'st thou, maid?

Elect. —— The sweets of peace,
Ne'er be charm'd to joy or ease: 310
Now the gen'rous youth is gone,
Hope and vengeance are undone.

IV.

Cho. Death is the portion of mankind.

Elect. But not like him, by furious courfers borne,
Bruis'd, disfigur'd, mangled, torn, 315
Shall all a death of horror find?

Cho. Dark, unforeseen is fate's surprise.

Elect. His fate was unforeseen indeed,
In a foreign land to bleed;
Without these hands to close his eyes. 320

Cho. Unhappy Prince!

Elect. —— No obsequies to have;
Nor weeping friends to mourn thee to the grave.

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Chrysothemis, Electra, and Chorus.

CHRYSTHEMIS.

FOR joy, my dearest, I forgot my sex,
Neglected decency, and ran impatient
To bring you grateful news; whose glad surprise
Will end those ills which you so long have mourn'd.

C 2

Elect.

Elect. Where canst thou find a cure for my misfortunes, 5

On which no beam of comfort e'er can dawn ?

Chry. Enlarge thy hopes : Orestes is arriv'd ;
Arriv'd as surely as I live to speak it.

Elect. Or rather dost thou rave, unhappy girl !
And sport with my afflictions and thy own. 10

Chry. By all the gods, I do not trifle with you,
Or dally with your woes, but know he's come.

Elect. By what unerring arguments convinc'd,
That you so strongly bend to their report.

Chry. I owe not to report th' uncertain tale, 15
But to these eyes, that saw th' unerring signs.

Elect. What signs ? What could'st thou see, too cre-
To kindle this fantastic fever up ? [d'lous maid ?

Chry. Hear, I conjure you, ere you quite condemn,
And judge, if reason warrant my assertion. 20

Elect. If the relation gives you pleasure, speak.

Chry. Thus, then : As I approach'd the hallow'd tomb
Wherein my father's peaceful ashes lie,

I saw the ground with streams of milk distain'd,
Fresh pour'd, and flowing from the tufted hillocks ; 25

And all the flowers the genial season yields,
Strew'd in a circle round the sepulchre.

I saw, and wond'ring ; and look'd all around,

Lest any one unseen should steal upon me,
And interrupt my search. But when I saw 30

All things in solitude and perfect rest,

I nearer to the tomb advanc'd, and there,

Upon the utmost pile, a lock of hair,

Fresh cut, in waves was spread ; when straight my soul

Presented young Orestes to my thoughts, 35

And whisper'd me, 'twas his which I beheld :

The tokens of that dear-lov'd man's return.

I took it up, and spoke auspicious words,

And my glad eyes o'erflow'd with tears of joy.

And then my conscious soul believ'd as now, 40

Those fun'ral honours came from none but him.

To whom but me, or you, belong'd this office ?

I did it not, I'm sure ; nor you, I think :

How could you, who from hence are not allow'd

A moment's absence, tho' to worship Heav'n ? 45

My

My mother——she delights not in such acts;
 Nor could she do it, but we must have known.
 None but Orestes then could pay these honours.
 Have comfort, sister; not the same harsh god
 With unremitting fury still pursues;
 The storm o'erblown, a pleasing calm succeeds;
 To-day, perhaps, the low'ring scene will change,
 Revive our souls, and brighten them with gladness.

Elect. Oh, senseless raptures! how I pity thee!

Chry. What! is the news ungrateful then at last? 55

Elect. You know not where you are, nor what you speak.

Chry. Do I not know what these my eyes beheld?

Elect. Lose not an hope in search of poor Orestes,
 Nor build thy safety there; for he—is dead.

Chry. Oh, heav'ns! where did you learn the fatal news? 60

Elect. From one who stood and saw the youth expire.

Chry. I stand amaz'd! Where is this fatal herald?

Elect. Caress'd within, and welcome to my mother.

Chry. Oh, fatal! Whose were all those off'rings then,
 Which grac'd my father's tomb?

Elect. ————— We must suppose 65
 Some friend has plac'd them there, the monuments
 Of dead Orestes' love.

Chry. ————— Deceitful joy!
 I hasted, ravish'd with the strong delight,
 Nor dreamt of this disastrous turn of fate.
 But now too well I find our former ills 70

Maintain their ground, and call up fresh afflictions!

Elect. Too true th' increase; but if you'll learn of me,
 I'll teach you how we may redeem ourselves.

Chry. Oh, can we raise the dead to life again?

Elect. Believe not my conceits tow'r up to madness. 75

Chry. What would'st thou then prescribe, that I can

Elect. Resolve but to perform what I advise. [aid in?]

Chry. If to our honour, fear not a repulse.

Elect. Think, nothing can without some pains succeed.

Chry. I do, and will contribute to my pow'r. 80

Elect. Hear then the resolution I have form'd;

'Twere vain to urge our want of friends to you,
 Who know that we have none; that cruel death

Has torn them hence, and we are left alone.
 While yet Orestes liv'd, my flatter'd grief 85
 Encourag'd hopes that he would one day come,
 And satisfy my father's crying blood :
 But, now he is no more, I look on you,
 To aid your sister in the pious work ;
 And help to kill th' assassin, curs'd Ægysthus ! 90
 I'll spread the counsels of my soul before you,
 And we with open bosoms will converse.
 Why should you still be passive in your wrongs ?
 Is there redress in hope, but from ourselves ?
 Does not oppression grind us every way ? 95
 Are we not spoil'd of our paternal rights ?
 Debarr'd of Hymen's joys, and wasting all
 Our bloom of life in virgin solitude ?
 And, Oh, believe it must be ever thus !
 Nor will the tyrant's caution give us room 100
 To propagate a race to his destruction.
 But if you'll follow the advice I give,
 Your sire and brother shall conspire to praise,
 And, from the grave, applaud the gen'rous action.
 Then shall you be saluted, noble, free, 105
 As nature and your princely birth design'd ;
 And worthy youths shall sigh for your embrace.
 For virtue is a charm fires every breast.
 Do you not see what glory, what applause,
 You purchase to yourself and me by this ? 110
 What citizen, what stranger, seeing us,
 Will not with these encomiums mark us out ?——
 Behold the sisters !—friends, the rival pair,
 Who from destruction rais'd their father's house !
 Who brav'd the fury of triumphant foes, 115
 Attack'd their pomp, and struck the righteous blow ;
 Of life regardless !——These should always be
 The subjects of our wonder and our love ;
 These should be honour'd, courted, and proclaim'd,
 And in our feasts, assemblies and our streets, 120
 Hymn'd and distinguish'd for heroic souls !——
 Such language shall we hear from every tongue,
 And live eternal in the voice of fame.
 Follow me, then ; revenge your father's blood ;
 Make dead Orestes smile, and rescue me ; 125
 Rescue

E L E C T R A.

37

Rescue yourself; shake off the guilty chain:
For gen'rous souls disdain a vile dependance.

Cho. Prudence is useful in affairs like these,
To counsel, or embrace th' important task.

Chry. Had she but weigh'd her words before she
spoke, 130

She would have kept what now she has not done,
A modest prudence, and an useful caution.
What prospect of success, that thus you arm,
And ask me to assist the daring work?

Regard your feeble sex and tender form, 135
In strength inferior to the foes you brave:

Behold how Fortune woos them with her smiles,
While we are crush'd by fate, and waste to nothing.

Who then, invading one defended thus,
But must expect the death he thought to give? 140

Take heed we do not aggravate our ills,
And purchase new distress, if overheard:

Poor is th' advantage of that vain renown,
Which, panting to obtain, we earn by death! 145

Tho' death, perhaps, will be esteem'd a mercy;
And when 'tis courted, life shall be our doom;

To suffer on, and taste protracted anguish.

But, I conjure you, ere we furious run

Into the gripe of Fate, and cast away

The last remains of Agamemnon's blood, 150

Restrain your rage, and what your rashness utter'd

Shall perish, and be lost to my remembrance.

Be wise at length, taught by prevailing woe;

And, since unable to contend, submit.

Cho. Be rul'd; for wisdom and a prudent mind, 155

Are the two greatest goods that men enjoy.

Elect. Your answer does not disappoint my thoughts;

For well I knew you would reject the work:

Therefore the noble task remains for me.

It must be done, and shall not want a hand. 160

Chry. Oh, had you been of this heroic soul

When first my father fell, you'd done it then!

Elect. I had the soul, but wanted years for action.

Chry. And want them still for desp'rate acts like these.

Elect. How full of counsel! barren of assistance! 165

Chry. For rash attempts oft crush their wretched author.

Elect.

Elect. Your wisdom I admire, your fears I hate.

Chry. The time will come when I shall have your praise.

Elect. The time will never come, when you'll deserve it.

Chry. Th' event of things will best determine this. 170

Elect. Begone; for I expect no aid from thee.

Chry. You might. The fault is in your own resolves.

Elect. Go, and betray my counsels to the Queen!

Chry. I nourish not an hate that thirsts your ruin.

Elect. Yet you could brook to draw me to dishonour. 175

Chry. Not to dishonour, but to prudent care.

Elect. Must I then follow where your fancy leads?

Chry. When you think better, you shall lead——

Elect. ————— 'Tis strange,

That she who speaks so well should act so ill.

Chry. The condemnation on yourself returns. 180

Elect. But does not justice warrant my designs!

Chry. 'Tis dang'rous to be always strictly just.

Elect. Such maxims ne'er shall regulate my actions.

Chry. You would have cause to thank me if they did.

Elect. By Heav'n, I'll not be scar'd from my resolves. 185

Chry. And will you not be wrought to safer counsels?

Elect. No; evil counsel is the worst of things.

Chry. You set a wrong construction on my words.

Elect. My purpose is not new, a start of passion;

But weigh'd with reason, and confirm'd by time. 190

Chry. I'm gone, since you my reasons disapprove,
As I your actions.

Elect. ———— Wherefore go you not?

I would not load you with my secrets more,

Tho' you should kneel in tears, and beg to share them:

It argues folly to pursue a trifle. 195

Chry. Enjoy your fancied wisdom by yourself;

When ruin'd, you'll too late approve my caution.

[Exit Chrysothemis.]

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

Electra remains on the Stage while the Chorus sings.

I.

Cho. Why, when th' inhabitants of air,
 With tender duty, grateful care,
 Grant their aged parents food 200
 To whom their little souls they ow'd ;
 Why do not reas'ning men the same,
 And their whole lives by those dumb patterns frame ?
 But by Jove's shafts with terror bright,
 By heav'nly Themis, and eternal right, 205
 The wretch that dares their pow'r, shall soon
 Be from his guilty triumphs thrown.
 Thou, Fame, that dost all mortal actions know,
 Thy melancholy trumpet blow ;
 Pierce the centre with the sound, 210
 The ears of the Atridæ wound ;
 Whilst thou dost a tale relate,
 Full of sorrow, full of fate !

II.

How all their house in wild disorder stands ;
 The children disunite their friendly hands ; 215
 How Electra, wretched maid !
 Forlorn, t' a thousand ills betray'd,
 For her father melts in tears,
 And a constant sorrow wears :
 As in sorrow-singing strains 220
 The mournful nightingale complains.
 Fearless of danger and of death,
 She would a victory obtain,
 Would see the two domestic furies slain,
 And in the glorious cause resign her breath. 225
 For who, of noble parents born,
 Can live a slave to guilt and impious scorn ?

III.

III.

The well-descended and the great,
 Throw off the vile incumb'ring weight
 Of things that would obscure their fame, 230
 Assert their glory, and redeem their name.
 Thou, Oh, noble, wretched fair!
 Who hast a life of irksome woes
 Before dishonest honours chose;
 Thou shalt double praises wear; 235
 Stand eternally renown'd,
 With justice and with wisdom crown'd.

IV.

Oh, may'st thou live, succeed, and grow,
 In strength above the tyrants' soar;
 As much as now thou art below, 240
 And crush'd by their injurious pow'r.
 I've seen thee struggling with thy fate,
 Inimitably shine;
 Amidst thy sorrows resolutely great,
 Religious, constant, and divine. 245

END of the THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Orestes, Pylades, Electra, Chorus, and Attendants on
 Orestes.

ORESTES.

YE virgins, will your goodness set me right,
 If, misinform'd by guides, I tread erroneous?
Cho. Whom do you seek, or whither would you go?
Orest. My search determines in Ægythus' palace.
Cho. This is the dome: accuse not your director. 5
Orest. Which of you will inform the royal house,
 Some Phocian men have business with Ægythus?
Elect. Oh, heav'ns! are these the messengers of fate,
 Who bring the proofs of the report we heard?

Orest.

E L E C T R A.

35

Orest. I know not what you heard; but aged Stro-
phius

10

Dispatch'd me here with news about Orestes.

Elect. What is it, stranger? Oh, I shake for fear!

Orest. In that small urn we bring the small remains
Of his dead body.

Elect. ——— Oh, my wretched state!

Then is the measure of my sorrows full.

15

Orest. If these your tears are for Orestes shed,
Know, that this urn contains the man you mourn.

Elect. Oh, then, if ever pity touch'd your breast,
Permit me to receive it in these arms;

To mourn my own and his disastrous fate,
And wash his ashes with unfeigned tears.

20

Orest. Whoe'er she be, surrender her the urn;
She asks not like a foe; but all her words
Bespeak a friend's concern, or kindred love.

Elect. Oh, dear memorial of my dearest friend!

25

Ye scanty relics of Orestes! — Oh,
How different from him my hopes had form'd!

From him I sent, do I receive you now?
Dissolv'd to dust, and crumbling into nothing.

I sent you forth a glorious blooming child;

30

But, Oh, that I had dy'd an hundred times,
Ere thus condemn'd you to a luckless exile!

Stol'n from thy mother's rage, and sav'd from slaughter;
For on that day thou might'st have fall'n secure,

And had a share of Agamemnon's tomb!

35

Now far from home, stretch'd on a foreign shore

You perish'd — There no sister was at hand,

To wash thy cold and stiffen'd limbs, or bear

A torch to kindle up thy fun'ral flame.

But dress'd by strangers' hands at length you come,

40

A little body in a little urn.

Alas, my' unprofitable nursing cares,

The busy offices I paid your youth,

My pleasing labours o'er your infant years,

Are come to nought! *Electra* rear'd thee up,

45

And with her fondness eas'd th' attendant's task;

View'd thee with joy above thy mother's raptures,

And prov'd thy sister in distinguish'd passion.

But one curs'd day has mow'd down all my labours,

And,

And, like a whirlwind, swept their mem'ry hence, 50
 And thee with them. My father went before :
 Now I am dead to thee, and thou to me.
 Our foes insult ; our mother, in contempt
 Of nature, triumphs, and grows mad with pleasure :
 On whom I long have fed delusive hopes 55
 That thou would'st come, and reap the vengeance due.
 But fate has frustrated the just event,
 And mock'd my expectations with thy dust.
 Oh, weight of sorrow ! most untimely change !
 Unhappy progress, and destructive games ! 60
 How hast thou kill'd thy sister, poor Orestes !
 Receive me, therefore to thy little house,
 Like thee, a shadow : so may we converse,
 And meet below, to mourn our mutual suff'rings :
 For whilst thou wert on earth, my soul partook 65
 Of all thy pleasures, griev'd in all thy pains ;
 And therefore would I die and share thy tomb :
 For all is peace, all quiet in the grave.

Cho. Oh, think, Electra, on your mortal state !
 Think too, Orestes, like yourself, was mortal, 70
 And let that calm your sorrows. Death's a debt
 All owe to nature, all at times must pay.

Orest. What shall I say ? My bosom swells for vent,
 And I'm no longer master of my tongue.

Elect. Whence is th' oppression of your heaving
 breast ? 75

Orest. Is that Electra's celebrated face ?

Elect. This is her face ; but all its charms are dead.

Orest. Curse on the suff'rings that have spoil'd thy
 beauty !

Elect. How can my griefs from thee deserve this pity ?

Orest. Oh, beauteous form, consum'd and worn with
 sorrows ! 80

Elect. All your complaints will centre in this wretch.

Orest. To waste her youth in virgin solitude !

Elect. Why dost thou look upon me thus, and sigh ?

Orest. I was a stranger to my griefs till now.

Elect. And can you see them by reflection here ? 85

Orest. I see thee vex'd with unexampled wrongs.

Elect. You see but little of the ills I bear.

Orest. Can sorrow furnish out a scene more dreadful ?

Elect.

Elect. Yes ; to be forc'd to dwell with murderers.

Orest. Of whom ?

Elect. — My father : forc'd to be their slave. 90

Orest. Who is the author of this cruel force ?

Elect. One whose fell actions give the lie to nature ;
And say, she's not my mother. —

Orest. — But the means ?

Does she by strong compulsion bow you down,
Or savagely withdraw your life's support ? 95

Elect. By all th' extremes her impious heart can think,
She gives me woe —

Orest. — Is no protector near ?

Elect. None ; he that would have been, is here — in dust.

Orest. My heart is wounded with your helpless state.

Elect. Thou only hast with kind compassion view'd
me. 100

Orest. I only feel the sympathetic pain.

Elect. Dost thou to ties of blood owe thy compassion ?

Orest. Might I confide my fortunes with these maids,
ou then should learn —

Elect. — Their faith is bound to me.

Orest. Set down the urn, and you shall hear my
story. 105

Elect. Now, by the gods, let me possess this treasure.

Orest. Be counsell'd, maid ; you will not err in this.

Elect. By all the honours of your birth, I beg,

orce not these dear remains from my embrace.

Orest. You must not keep them —

Elect. — Oh, increase of woe ! 110

I'm deny'd to bury thee, Orestes.

Orest. Auspicious speak ; your sorrow is not just.

Elect. Do I not justly mourn my brother's death ?

Orest. The word is out of time ; forbear these sounds.

Elect. Am I not worthy then to mourn his fate ? 115

Orest. Of nought unworthy ; but your sorrows err.

Elect. What, when I bear his ashes in my hands ?

Orest. You only carry his imagin'd dust.

Elect. Ah ! where is then the wretched youth interr'd ?

Orest. No where — the living covet not a grave. 120

Elect. Is he alive ? —

Orest. — He is, if I am so.

Elect. And art thou he ?

D

Orest.

Orest. ——— Behold my father's signet,
And know your brother from the happy proof.

Elect. Oh, blessed day !

Orest. ——— I join to bless it with you.

Elect. And do I hear thee speak ?

Orest. ——— Distrust not, maid.

125

Elect. Do my arms hold thee ?

Orest. ——— May they ever do so.

Elect. My dear companions, do you see Orestes,
Reviving by those arts that spoke him dead ?

Cho. I see, Oh, virgin ! and the sudden joy
Trickles in tears of pleasure from my eyes.

130

Elect. Oh, thou lov'd offspring of my much-lov'd fire,
You're come, you've found a long-expecting friend !
You're come, you've seen whom long you wish'd to see !

Orest. I'm come ; but speak not with so loud a joy.

Elect. Wherefore ?

Orest. ——— Lest they within o'er-hear your tran-
sports.

135

Elect. But, by Diana, the unconquer'd maid,
Electra will not condescend to fear

What women's impotence can do against us.

Orest. Remember, women have their martial hours.

Elect. Oh, you have set before my eyes afresh, 140
The glaring image of my father's wrongs ;

An ever-living scene of villainy,

Ne'er to be expiated, ne'er forgot !

Orest. I know our wrongs, and, at a proper hour,
You shall relate the mournful tale entire.

145

Elect. It is a theme will suit with ev'ry time ;
But most with this ; for at this present hour
I have regain'd the liberty of speech.

Orest. Be studious to preserve what you've regain'd.

Elect. How ?

Orest. By restraining these extatic joys.

150

Elect. Who could be silent in a joy like mine ?
Who smother the big rapture, thus transported,
When I behold thee in a glad surprise,
As ris'n from death, and by a wonder rescu'd ?

Orest. You saw me, when the gods first bade me
come.

155

Elect.

E L E C T R A.

39

Elect. My joys encrease with every word thou speak'st,
And thy last accents yield superior pleasure.
For if the gods instructed thy return,
Kind Heav'n concerns itself in our distress,
And sure will prosper what itself began. 160

Orest. I would indulge the transports of your joy,
But fear they're too excessive to be safe.

Elect. Since after such a painful age of absence,
At length you come to bless my longing eyes, 164
That have been quench'd with sorrow, do not now——

Orest. What must I not ?

Elect. —— Deprive me of the joy,
Th' unmeasur'd joy I feel in gazing on thee.

Orest. I will not, sister ; 'twould displease me much,
Should any one attempt in that to wrong thee.

Elect. And does my fondness please thee ?

Orest. —— Should it not ? —— 170

Elect. Oh, friends, I heard the dreadful tale of death !
Then my strong passion was without a voice,
Compell'd to hear, nor suffer'd to lament :
But now I hold thee, and thy lovely form,
Whose image sorrow could not e'er erase, 175
With cordial smiles revives my fainting soul.

Orest. Oh, stop this wild career of swelling pleasure !
Nor tell me now my mother's impious deeds ;
Nor how Ægyſthus drains my father's house,
Squanders his wealth, and riots in his substance. 180
Th' untimely speech would hinder our design.
Rather instruct the course of my revenge :
Shall we with open force rush boldly on them,
Or by a licens'd fraud deceive our foes,
And suddenly surprise them into ruin ? 185

But, Oh, take heed, suppress your struggling joy,
Nor let your mother trace its infant pleasures !
Still wear the sorrow which you did before,
And for my death suppos'd, dissembling sigh.
When fate has crown'd us with th' events we wish, 190
Then may we smile, and give a loose to joy.

Elect. Oh, brother, still your pleasure shall be mine !
For all my pleasure takes its rise from you :
No comforts has Electra from herself ;
Nor would I rob you of a moment's ease, 195

To purchase to myself the greatest joy :
 For should my transports stop your glorious aims,
 They would affront the now assisting pow'rs.
 You know th' affairs within, and have been told
 Ægysthus is not there ; my mother is. 200
 But harbour not a thought, that she shall e'er
 Behold a transport kindle on this cheek ;
 Hate shall controul and dash each rising pleasure :
 And ev'n beholding thee, my tears afresh
 Shall stream for joy : for how should I forbear, 205
 Who in the space of one short morn have seen thee
 Dead and alive, miraculous surprize !
 Should my dead father now return from earth,
 I should not wonder, but believe my sense.
 Since then so unexpected thou art come, 210
 Perform the work which else was doom'd for me :
 For ere you came, my soul had entertain'd
 Resolves of vengeance, with a glorious view
 Of noble freedom, or of noble death.

Orest. But soft : for some approach us from within ; 215

Elect. Strangers, go in ;—ye messengers of things
 None can refuse, yet none with joy receive.

S C E N E II.

Governor, Orestes, Pylades, Attendants, Electra and Chorus.

Gov. Oh, lost to wisdom, and all prudent thoughts !
 Have you abandon'd all concern for life ?
 Shook hands with reason, and bid Fate deince ? 220
 Who stand not near, but in the midst of dangers,
 And those the greatest too, yet know it not ?
 For had not I secur'd these outward gates,
 Employ'd their ears, and guarded ev'ry sense,
 Your measures had by this, been all betray'd : 225
 But I have cover'd you as yet with care ;
 Wherefore give o'er these talkative delays ;
 And this insatiate burst of noisy joy ;
 And enter strait : for in attempts like these,
 Delays are ill, when deeds require dispatch. 230

Orest. Are all things ready to receive me there ?

Gov. All, all ; nor can they know you.

Orest.

Orest. ——— Then you told
The necessary tale of my decease.

Gov. Before, you're dead to all the world but us.

Orest. Did they with raptures hear the news, or how?

Gov. Suspend the long recital till anon; 236
For all looks well within, yet all's not well.

Elect. For Heav'n's sweet sake, Orestes, who is this?

Orest. Know you not him?

Elect. ——— I cannot call to mind.

Orest. Have you forgot to whom you once bequeath'd
me? 240

Elect. Whom do you mean?

Orest. ——— By whose officious hands
Your love convey'd me to the Phocian land?

Elect. Is this that only faithful man I found,
Durst aid th' afflicted when my father fell?

Orest. He is; at present seek no farther proof. 245

Elect. Oh, blessings on thy head, thou great support
Of Agamemnon's house! And art thou he
Redeem'd us from such ills? Oh, let me kiss
Those hands, and kneel t' embrace those aiding feet.
How could you keep yourself so long conceal'd? 250
Or how my eyes mistake you, though disguis'd?
Your words were cruel, but your works were kind;
Ill was your news, but friendly its design.

Hail, father! (for I see my father in you,)
Hail! Never was a man in one short day 255
So much detested, and so much ador'd! —

Gov. Enough of praise; until the circling hours
Inform you farther how we have deserv'd;
And teach you all the series of our fortunes.
But now I turn myself to you, my prince; 260
'Tis time for action; Clytemnestra's now
Alone without her guard; if you omit
This happy moment, think you will be drove
T' encounter numbers arming in her rescue.

Orest. The present business wants no more debate; 265
But, Oh! my Pylades, let's haste to action:
Thus bending to these genial pow'rs for aid,
Who grace the portal, and protect the dome.

[*Exeunt Orestes, Pylades, and Governor.*]

S C E N E III.

Electra and Chorus.

Elect. O king Apollo, hear them when they pray;
 And me with them; who with a bounteous hand 270
 Have ever, to my pow'r, adorn'd thy shrine.
 And now, O Lycian god, prostrate, with awe,
 I bleſs thy godhead, and implore thy favour;
 Aſſiſt the righteous vengeance now in hand,
 And ſhew mankind with what deteſting eyes 275
 The gods behold and puniſh guilty mortals!

S C E N E IV.

C H O R U S.

I.

Cho. See where the god of battle ſtalks,
 Breathing diſcord, foaming blood;
 Through all the guilty haunts he walks;
 Th' avenging furies at his heels provoke 280
 The deſtin'd ſtroke,
 No more to be avoided, or withſtood.
 For horror now the ſcene does draw,
 Which my prophetic ſoul foreſaw.

II.

Agamemnon's ſhade t' appeaſe, 285
 With ſilent ſteps behold the ſon,
 Beneath the guilty roof is gone;
 And ſee! the vengeful ſword he brandiſhes!
 Maia's ſon attendance pays,
 And wrapt in clouds the youth conveys; 290
 While he the taſk of fate obeys,
 Unknowing of delays.

END of the FOURTH ACT.

ACT

ELECTRA.

43

ACT V. SCENE I.

Electra and Chorus.

ELECTRA.

WAIT with attentive silence, dearest maids;
For strait they will achieve the work of horror.

Cho. Oh! how do they proceed?

Elect. ————— While she prepares

The customary banquet, to allay

The sorrow of her son's imagin'd death;

They press around her, watchful; —

Cho. ————— Wherefore then.

Did you come forth?

Elect. ————— To guard against surprize,
And give them notice, should Ægythus come.

Cly. [*Within.*] Oh, fatal hour! some help — I am
beset;

Naked of friends, and cover'd with destroyers!

Elect. What shrieks are those? Did you not hear
them, friends?

Cho. I heard the frightful cry, and shake with horror.

Cly. [*Within.*] Confusion! Oh, Ægythus, Oh! where
are you?

Elect. The noise grows louder.

Cly. [*Within.*] ————— Oh, my son, my son,
Have pity on thy mother!

Elect. ————— Thou had'st none
On him, or on his bleeding father. —

Cho. ————— Oh!

Oh, wretched city! Oh, disastrous race!

Death and destruction lay the princes waste!

Cly. [*Within.*] Oh! I am hurt.

Elect. ————— Repeat, repeat the blow.

Cly. [*Within.*] Alas! for mercy —

Elect. ————— Oh, that curst Ægythus,
Caught in the toil, did groan like thee, defenceless!

Cho. The potent execrations are fulfill'd!
The long deceas'd revive; and drain the blood
Of those, whose hands were once embu'd in slaughter!

SCENE

S C E N E II.

Electra, Orestes, Pylades, *Attendants*, and Chorus.

Elest. Behold they come ! And their discolour'd hands
Drop with the crimson sacrifice of Mars ! 26

Speak, my Orestes, how succeeds our cause ?

Orest. All's well within ; unless the god deceive :
The wretch is dead ; nor need you longer fear,
Your mother's pride shall e'er insult you more. 30

Cho. No more ; —for, lo ! Ægythus is in fight.

Elest. Oh, yet retire ; he comes as you could wish ;
He comes in triumph from his rural sports ;
And unsuspecting joy glows on his cheek.

Cho. Therefore with speed retire, ere he behold : 35
And since auspicious fate has led the way,
Complete the work you have so well begun.

Orest. Fear not ; success shall crown us —

Elest. ————— But, retire.

Orest. I go —

[*Orestes, Pylades, and Attendants retire.*]

Elest. ————— And leave the business here to me.

Cho. 'Twere fit a while we entertain the tyrant 40
With courteous accents, and dissembled meekness,
To win him on, and sooth him into ruin.

S C E N E III.

Ægythus, Electra, and Chorus.

Ægyth. Who can inform us where those Phocians are,
Who bring the tidings how Orestes perish'd,
Thrown from his chariot in the Pythian games ? 45

You, I suppose — whose daring insolence
Till now has lived in him : you, I suppose,
As most concern'd, can give the best account.

Elest. Too well, I can ; for how should I but know
The dearest accident which could befall me ? 50

Ægyth. Instruct us quickly where the strangers are.

Elest. Within ; they meet a kind reception there.

Ægyth. Do they bring certain news that he is dead ?

Elest. They do not tell it, but they shew him dead.

Ægyth. May we then witness to it with our eyes ? 55

Elest. You may behold the spectacle of horror !

E L E C T R A.

45

Ægyst. I never joy'd to hear thee speak till now!—

Elect. Be pleas'd, if things like these can give you pleasure.

Ægyst. Be silent, and set open all the gates;

Let all Mycenæ, nay, all Argos see: 60

If any one encourag'd empty hopes,

Let him behold the carcass of this man;

And bend him to my pow'r; nor hence presume

With disobedient pride to wake my wrath.

Elect. I will obey your orders——for at length 65
I've learnt submission; and must stoop to pow'r.

S C E N E IV.

SCENE opening discovers the body of Clytemnestra covered;
Orestes, Pylades, and Attendants round it, Ægysthus,
Electra, and Chorus.

Ægyst. By Heav'n, he's fallen; nor undeserv'd his
But, if my words transgress, I say no more. (fate!

Take from his face the veil, that I may pay
My debt of sorrow o'er my kinsman's body! 70

Orest. Yourself unveil it; it belongs to you,
First to behold and mourn the friend's disaster.

Ægyst. You well advise, and I'll obey your counsel;
Let some go call my Clytemnestra forth.——

Orest. She's near you; look not any where, but here—
[Uncovers the body.]

Ægyst. Death to my eyes!

Orest. —— Of, what are you afraid? 76
Are you a stranger to your consort's face?

Ægyst. In whose damn'd snares am I unhappy fall'n?

Orest. Do you but now begin to apprehend
You've parly'd with the man, imagin'd dead? 80

Ægyst. Alas! I understand the vaunting speech,
And fear Orestes spoke it.——

Orest. —— Boast thyself
No more a prophet, who so long hast err'd!

Ægyst. I feel, I am undone; but give me leave
To argue for a while.——

Elect. —— Now, by the gods, 85
Permit him not to waste the time in words.

What can a short reprieve from death import,
Per-

Perplex'd with fears, and lengthen'd out with pain ?
 Dispatch the villain strait ; and let them throw
 His body forth, a prey to dogs and vultures ?—
 Far from our fight ! for this alone remains
 To cure my sorrows, and conclude our vengeance.

Orest. No more delay of words ; but enter there ;—
 You are not now to argue, but to die.

Egyft. But wherefore enter there ?—If honour
 strikes,

Why should you shame to give the blow in public ?

Orest. Contend not with thy doom ; but strait obey ;
 For where you kill'd my father, thou shalt die.

Egyft. This house shall be the future scene of death,
 And drink the blood of all the race of Pelops.—

Orest. Thine it shall drink ; I dare foretel thee, tyrant.

Egyft. Your fire had no such talent of prediction !

Orest. Your speech offends ; and I delay too long.

Go on—

Egyft. But lead the way.

Orest. ———No ; thou shalt lead.

Egyft. Do you suspect I should escape your wrath ?

Orest. Heav'n guard my vengeance from a fear like
 that !

But I would rob thee of content in death,
 And make it bitter in each circumstance.
 Did justice thus pursue the sinner close,
 Nor lag with lazy steps behind the crime ;
 The world would then be frighted into virtue.

[*Goes in, driving Ægythus before him.*]

Cho. Oh, seed of Atreus, how hast thou been cross'd !
 Through what varieties of anguish tost !
 Till late, with stern attempts, the vengeful sword
 Has peace and banish'd liberty restor'd.

END of the FIFTH ACT.

NOTES

N O T E S .

UPON .

E L E C T R A .

THE subject of this tragedy is the return of Orestes from Phocis to Argos, and his revenge of his father's murder, in the death of Ægythus and Clytemnestra. But the poet did not think fit to give this poem a title from that important incident, which makes its catastrophe; but rather chose to call it Electra. This lady was the elder sister of Orestes, and who (when their father Agamemnon, on his return from Troy, was inhumanly murdered by his own wife Clytemnestra, and her paramour Ægythus) was the instrument of securing her tender brother from the rage of the murderers, by conveying him to Strophius, king of Phocis, through the care of a faithful and secret servant. Clytemnestra and Ægythus, after Agamemnon's death, possessing themselves of the government of Argos, slipped no opportunities of expressing their resentment towards Electra for this action.

The poet in her character has laboured to express her miseries with vast variety: and given her the true features of an heroic daughter through the whole poem. All her sentiments give a fresh subject for admiration; and she is equally wonderful in her strong and implacable resentments against her father's murderers; in her impatience for Orestes to come and revenge him; in her excessive sorrows for her brother's supposed disaster; in her

her transports, when she comes to know he is living; and in her zeal, for the performance of his revenge when once on foot.

I shall take notice of the artful constitution of this tragedy, in my following notes on the several acts; and what a natural foundation there is for the respective incidents, which are prepared without being foreseen.

The subject of Ægysthus and Clytemnestra's death employed the pens of the three great Greek tragedians; but they are all so different in the disposition of the same stories, that I believe (with Monsieur Hedelin, in his whole art of the stage;) they were the cause of that grand disorder and confusion, there is in story and chronology in those old times: because that they, having changed both the times and events for their own ends, have influenced some historians, who thought to pick out of them the truth of story, and so made all things uncertain. Any body that will read the *Electra* of Euripides, this of Sophocles, and the *Cœphoræ* of Æschylus, will easily see that they made no difficulty of contradicting one another, nor even themselves.

NOTES upon the FIRST ACT.

Ver. 1. *Governor.*] He supports the part of a very useful protactick; and by him the poet has artfully explained to the audience the place of the scene, Mycenæ in Argos; the time when the action commences, the break of day; the manner he received Orestes from his sister Electra, to be conveyed to Phocis; and Pylades's accompanying of Orestes, from Phocis, in his return to Argos.

Ver. 6. *Of Inachus's—Daughter.*] whose name was Io: but her story having no manner of relation to the present poem, I shall refer the reader for it to my Prometheus of Æschylus, which will shortly be published, where there is ample occasion for touching her history in many circumstances.

Ver. 8. *Glorious God of day.*] The original has it τῷ λυκοκτόνι θεῷ, of the *Wolf-destroying God*; but I was of opinion, this epithet would make no very beautiful appearance in English; and therefore was not obliged (according to Horace) *verbum verbo reddere*. Besides, that I do not remember the story of Apollo's destroying the wolves; any farther than as Mr. Lloyd, in his *Lexicon Historico-Poeticum*, says, (on the word, Lycius) that there was an oracle of the Lycian Apollo, *quid in Lycia maximè clarus fuit ob Luporum interfecionem*: or, perhaps, he obtained the epithet from the wolf's being sacrificed to him, as a beast obnoxious to his displeasure, who was the god of the shepherds. Or again, if we will learn the truth from Triclinius (one of the scholiasts,) on this passage, it will come very near my translation of it: for, he says, Apollo is to be considered allegorically as the sun; who by his presence and refulgence extinguishes the dawn, which resembles the colour of a wolf, (τῷ λύκῳ,) and therefore is called in Greek, τὸ λυκόφως.

Ver. 9. *Juno's awful temple.*] The Greek says, her famous temple; and Sophocles very skilfully takes notice of a temple to her there, because Argos (as likewise Mycenæ, Sparta, Samos, &c.) was peculiarly sacred to Juno.

E

In

30 NOTES UPON ELECTRA.

—*In Junonis honorem*
Aptum dicit equis Argos, ditescque Mycenæ.

says Horace; those who are curious of knowing her claim to this region, may consult Nat. Com. l. 8. cap. 22.

Ver. 16. *And you, Pylades.*] A stalking prince would make but a very odd figure on our theatre, however the mute character was relished by the Athenians. Sophocles has not given this prince leave to open his mouth; Æschylus indeed, in his *Cœphoræ*, has so far complimented his quality, as to make him speak three verses: And Euripides, who, in his *Electra*, has tied the tongue of Pylades, even when he had that lady given him by her brother, to wife; has in some measure made him amends in his *Orestes* and *Iphig. Taurica*, in both which he speaks, as well as acts, like a prince and a friend.

Ver. 54. *Mean while, as the great.*] The learned Dr. Potter, in his *Antiquities of Greece*, has inadvertently run into more than one error on this passage: for quoting it, he takes notice, "That *Electra* in Sophocles says, "that *Agamemnon* had commanded her and *Chrysothemis* to dedicate their hair to his tomb;" and therefore thus he translates it,

"With drink-off'rings and locks of hair, we must,
 "According to his will, his tomb adorn."

Now, in the first place, this is not spoken by *Electra* to her sister, but by *Orestes* to *Pylades*. And this error betrayed him into a worse mistake in the version; for (*ὡς ἐφίητο*) which he renders (*according to his will*) meaning *Agamemnon's*, has not the least regard to *Agamemnon*, but directly to *Apollo*; as any learned examiner may satisfy himself. *Ast opere in tanto fas est obrepere somnum.*

Ver. 68. *Oft have I heard.*] The scholiast thinks Sophocles had an eye to the story concerning *Pythagoras*, (told by *Hermippus* in *Diog. Laertius*;) "That when he came to Italy, he made a private room under ground; and having caused a report to be spread of
 "his

NOTES UPON ELECTRA. 51

“ his death, he hid himself in that room, ordering his
 “ mother to let him down meat privately from time to
 “ time, with an account in writing of all affairs that
 “ happened in Crotona, and the places about. After a
 “ time he comes abroad, pretending to be risen from the
 “ dead, and tells all the things that had happened since
 “ his supposed death, as if he had learned them in the
 “ other world.” Which project procured him a mighty
 authority. Tertullian, in his book of the Soul, gives
 the same account of this story; only adds this particular,
 that he stayed under ground seven years. 'Tis not im-
 probable, that Sophocles might have an eye to this story,
 as a thing not very distant from his own age: but that
 Orestes, who speaks, should do so too, would be to make
 him guilty of an Anachronism with a vengeance. There-
 fore I am inclined to suppose, it may have a reference to
 Ulysses more properly; but to this the scholiast will
 object, *ὃ γὰρ ὡς παλαιὰ τὴ τοῖσιν Ὀδυσσεύϊ*, there no such
 thing happened to Ulysses: No, he did not hide under
 ground for a season; but he was long supposed dead at
 Ithaca, and rose upon them suddenly from obscurity to
 splendor.

Ver. 90. *Appease, invoke.*] This is one mark of the
 poet's art in his scenery, that he will not permit Orestes
 to stay on the stage to be satisfied in Electra's cause of
 sorrow; for then the discovery of his return would be
 too early: but he clears the scene, not only to make
 room for Electra's complaints to herself; but likewise by
 sending Orestes to make oblations at his father's tomb,
 prepares a remembrance which cannot be foreseen, and
 which he has reserved for the opening of his third act.

Ver. 165. *And how, Iphianassa.*] Triclinius upon this
 place says, that Euripides and the other poets, mean one
 person by Iphigenia and Iphianassa. That the Latin
 poets, as well as the Greek, confound these two names,
 is plain from these lines of Lucretius,

*Aulide quo pacto Triviai Virginis aram
 Iphianassai turpârunt sanguine fœdè
 Ductores, Danaum delicti, prima virorum.*

52 NOTES UPON ELECTRA.

But then the commentators are staggered to know, why the poet should make the Chorus mention Iphianassa, or Iphigenia, who was now at Diana's shrine in Tauris: But Triclinius says, the Chorus mention her though absent from Mycenæ, with the same reason they do Orestes; who, as they thought, was at Phocis. I must confess, I do not pretend to be certain whom the poet here intends by Iphianassa; but I think, with submission to Triclinius, Sophocles did not here mean Iphigenia: for it would be very absurd to suppose Iphigenia in a living capacity of mourning for her father, when in the first scene of the second act, Clytemnestra excuses her murder of Agamemnon, as a just reprisal upon him, for sacrificing her daughter Iphigenia on Diana's altar at Aulis.

Ver. 171. *Debar'd of wedlock.*] The poet throughout this tragedy, in many places, insinuates the hardship upon Electra, of being denied the privilege of marrying; and makes her complain to Chrysothemis, that Ægythus would never suffer them to propagate a race to his destruction. Euripides makes Ægythus marry her to a person who boasts of his family, but is decayed in his fortunes. Some, who favour Sophocles's opinion, will have her derive her name from her single state, *quasi ἀλέκτραν*, i. e. *sine Thalamo*. Ælian in his Various History informs us, that Xanthus, the Lyrick poet, says her first name was Laodice; but, that after Agamemnon's murder, ἀλέκτρον ἔσαν καὶ καταγεγῶσαν παρθέον Ἀργείοι ἠλέκτρον ἐκάλεσαν, διὰ τὸ ἀμοιρεῖν ἀνδρὸς, καὶ μὴ πεπεισῆσθαι λίαν, growing old in virginity, the Argives called her Electra, because of her living without an husband.

Ver. 184. *On Crisa's verdant shore.*] Crissa, or Crisa, was a town of Phocis near the Corinthian bay; which from its neighbourhood to that town, was called Sinus Crissæus.

Ver. 195. *And fed with offals.*] The Greek is κραιῖς δ' ἰφισαμαι τραπέζαις, *I am set at empty tables.*

Ver. 332. *Chrysothemis approach.*] Sophocles has partly introduced the character of Chrysothemis, a lady of a mild and condescending temper, to heighten the more manly and stubborn sentiments of Electra, as he does again the part of Ismene in his Antigone. But the entrance of Chrysothemis is likewise very artful, and necessary

cessary to the carrying on the plot of the play: for as Clytemnestra's ugly dream naturally required expiations to avert its horrors, so her sending Chrysothemis to make oblations at Agamemnon's tomb, easily prepares the first remembrance and suggestion of Orestes's return, by her finding a lock of his hair on the monument, and signs of other customary honours paid to the sepulchre.

Ver. 398. *Subterranean prison.*] It was a custom with the ancients, when they would make away with any one, and not be polluted (as they thought) with his blood; to shut him up in a dark cavern, and there leave him to die. I will give a confirmation of this by one example out of our own author: Creon having actually condemned Antigone to the same punishment with which Electra is here threatened, washes his hands of her blood; saying,

Ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἄσποὶ τὲπὶ τήνδ' τὴν κόρην,

Upon which the scholiast comments thus, (τρίστις ἀποιώνηλοι) τὴ φόνος τέτυ, φησὶ, διὰ τὸ μὴ χερσὶν αὐτὴν ἀντηκέλαι.

Ver. 464. *To disarm resentment.*] These words I have added in explanation of a very odd custom, alluded to by the poet. If any one killed another treacherously, he strait cut off all the extreme parts of the outmost members of the party slain, and sewing or tying them together, wore them under his arm-pits; as an amulet or spell to prevent the furies from haunting the murderer. And they believed, that having part of the murdered body in their power, as an hostage, to do what they would with, the ghost of the party would not offer to meddle with them; or else would spare the bearer, for love of the carriage. The pieces thus cut off, they called ἀκρωτήρια, and ἀπάρματα, or ἐξάρματα, as in Apollonius: and the action of so mutilating the person, was called ἀκρωτηρίαζειν: so sometimes the pieces cut off, they called μασχαλισμάτα, from the action (μασχαλίζειν,) of fixing them under their arm-pits; which last term is used here by Sophocles.

Ver. 465. *Wipe the abomination off.*] The first scholiast on this passage says, he that had killed another, wiped off the stains of blood from his sword, either on the hair

54 NOTES UPON ELECTRA.

of his own head, or of the party slain. Triclinius says particularly on the hair of the party slain, which is undoubtedly the truest. I will go a step farther than either of the scholiasts on this place, by informing the reader, that they only thus wiped away the abomination of the fact, when they spilt the blood unjustly. But if they thought they did it in a good cause, they used to take the sword, and hold it up towards the sun with the blood on it; *Συμβολὸν τὸ δικαίως πεφονεύεσθαι*, says the scholiast on Euripides in Orestes; to shew that they feared not if Heaven were witness.

Ver. 528. *For 'er since Myrtilus.*] He was the son of Mercury by Phaëthusa; when he drove Oenomaus in a chariot-race, being corrupted by the promises of Pelops, he so ordered it, that his master's chariot broke by the way, and his master with the fall, broke his neck. Oenomaus expiring, conjured Pelops to revenge his death; who afterwards, when Myrtilus demanded the reward of his treachery, threw him from a rock into the sea, which from his name was called the Myrtoan sea.

NOTES upon the SECOND ACT.

Ver. 2. *Ægysthus is not here.*] The poet's contrivance is wonderful in making Ægysthus absent; for thereby he takes occasion to heighten Electra's distress, by saying, she could not have had the liberty of stirring out of the palace, if he were at home; and likewise by leaving Clytemnestra alone, he facilitates the catastrophe of his poem. Euripides has likewise, in his Electra, sent him into the fields to do sacrifice, and make a rural banquet.

Ver. 18. *Murdered your sister.*] This confirms what I have observed on the first act, that Iphianassa could not be intended for Iphigenia by Sophocles, whom he so often in Clytemnestra's speech expressly intimates to be dead; and therefore Triclinius, on one passage, notes thus, *ἦγεν ἢ Ἰφιγένεια, ἐχ' ἢ ὑπ' Ἀλέμειδ' ἀπαλεῖσαν, ἀλλὰ θανέσαν ἠγείτο*. But I designed this note of a different nature; all discourses brought on the stage, ought to have no particular reference to the diversion of the

NOTES UPON ELECTRA. 55

audience, unless drawn from the very ground and nature of the subject, and absolutely necessary to the same. I fear Clytemnestra's vindication of her husband's death, and Electra's condemnation of her for it, will fall under the displeasure of this rule; for however fine and affecting the discourses may be in themselves, I doubt they are introduced with regard to the spectators alone; for as Agamemnon had been killed twenty years ago, it necessarily argues, that the justice, or guilt of his death, must have been a subject already sufficiently canvassed betwixt Clytemnestra and her daughter.

Ver. 29. *They both had dy'd.*] The old authors vary mightily in regard to Helen's Children. Eustathius on Homer says, she only bore Hermione, and that she was not permitted to have any more children, because childbirth is accounted to spoil women's beauty. But some say, she bore two children to Paris. Sophocles here gives her two by Menelaus; which agrees, as the scholiast observes, with Hesiod's account,

Ἡ τέκεθ' Ἡρμιόνην θαρμυλῶ Μενελάῳ,
Ὀπλότατον δ' ἔτακεν Νικόστειον, ἕξον Ἀρηῶ.

But Pausanias in Corinthiac, says, Menelaus had Nicostratus and Megapenthes by a she-slave; but others say, her proper name was Δέλη, i. e. *Servæ*.

Ver. 123. *Inauspicious words.*] 'Tis almost too well known to require a note, how superstitious the old Greeks were in point of all ominous words, and particularly in matters of religion. Before their holy ceremonies began, the cryer gave this charge to the people, *Εὐφημεῖτε*, which answers to the terms afterwards used by the Romans, *favete linguis*; which do not so strictly enjoin a deep silence, as an abstaining from all prophane and ominous words,

————— *Malè ominatīs*
Parcite verbis. Hor.

For they reckoned that such terms prophaned the sacrifice; (and therefore Plautus calls it, *obscenare*) and if these expressions were uttered by any one nearly related

56 NOTES UPON ELECTRA.

to the person, whose business was in hand, they took the greater notice of them, and accounted them so much the worse. Or if the omen were immediately caught by the hearer, or struck upon his imagination, it was of the more force.

Ver. 129. *Shall free me from the fears.*] We have heard already in the first act, that Clytemnestra had disclosed her dream to the *Rising Sun*, to deprecate its omen: this she did conformable to the customs of the ancients; and Triclinius helps us out with their reason for it, ἡ ἐπειδὴ ἰανλῖ (nempe ἥλιος) ἄνός ἐστι τῇ νυκτί, ἀπολεσπὴν ἐργάσθαι, &c. *because the sun being contrary to the night, might have power to avert, or expel all evils brought by the same.* And therefore they gave the sun or Apollo the epithets of ἀπολόπαιος, ἱερακιστής, &c. But this telling of dreams was not always appropriated to one particular deity, but sometimes to Hercules, Jupiter, or the Household Gods. Nor was the disclosing of their fears reckoned sufficient, but they were to offer incense, or other oblations, and pray (as Clytemnestra here does) that if good was portended, it might be brought to pass; if the contrary, that the gods would avert whatever ill was boded by them. Æschylus, in his Persians, lets us into another custom in these cases; Queen Atossa being terrified by a nocturnal vision, as soon as she rose, went to a river, and washed away the pollutions of the night, before she approached the altars of the gods;

Ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνέστη, καὶ χερσὶν καλλιῆξεν
Ἐφάουσα πηγῆς, ὅνδ' ἀνιπτόλῳ χερσὶ
Βωμῶν προσέειπεν, ἀπολέσποισι δαίμοσι
Θύεσθαι θύσαι μέλανον, ὥν τέλη τάδε.

The scholiast on this place of Æschylus gives a different reason, why the sun was looked upon as the averter of dreams, τέτυ γὰρ ἐπιλάμψαντες, οἱ ὕμνοι διασκεδάσθαι, *for be once shining, dreams vanish and are dissipated.*

Ver. 157. *Her dress and person.*] The original is πρὸς γὰρ ὡς τύξαντο εἰσερεῖν, which Mr. Johnson's late edition renders, *Decoro enim, ut regina, videtur vultu.* But I cannot think this expresses the whole meaning of the Greek,

NOTES UPON ELECTRA. 57.

Greek, as if the governor knew Clytemnestra to be a queen only by her face ; but (as the scholiast says better) *σοχάζεσθαι ἐκ τῆς εὐλῆς καὶ τῶν βασιλείων*, he concluded her such, from her robes and regalia.

Ver. 172. *Κνοίω, mighty queen.*] I have taken a liberty in this narration, for which, however I may be accused by the adorers of Sophocles, I shall be easily pardoned by every English reader : I have ventured rather to make an agreeable innovation on, than be a faithful translator of, a passage which contains too tedious and graphical a description of the Pythian games to be relished at this time of day ; and cools the passion which it should excite, and keep warm by its conciseness and distress.

Ver. 174. *Celebrates her Pythian games.*] Aristotle finds fault with this narration in the *Electra* ; upon which it may not be improper to add part of Mr. Dacier's remarks. Sophocles was not so prudent and judicious in the management of some other of his pieces, as he was in *Oedipus* ; for in his *Electra*, he was guilty of the very fault that Aristotle here mentions, by putting in something that was absurd, and which is the more vicious, because he was the author of it. In the second scene of the second act, he who brings the false news of Orestes's death, says, 'That that prince' being at the celebrated meeting of the Grecians, to assist at the Pythian games, won all the prizes, but was killed in the race of the chariots.' Aristotle thought this was absurd, and out of all reason, not because it was not probable, that *Ægysthus* and *Clytemnestra* should not hear the news before the arrival of those who brought Orestes's ashes, for there were a thousand things which might hinder that ; but because the Pythian games were not instituted till above five years after Orestes was dead, and this falsehood ruined all the probability of the piece, of which it was the foundation.—Without doubt, Sophocles thought his audience did not know the rise of those games, or else he would have taken care not to have made such an alteration in the epocha ; otherwise the absurdity is admirably well hid, under the wonderful charms which are in the relation, but that don't justify him.

Ver.

58 NOTES UPON ELECTRA.

Ver. 287. *The fate of Amphiaræus.*] He was a great soothsayer, who foreseeing that all who went with Adrastus to the Theban war should perish, Adrastus only excepted, refused to go along with him, and prevented several others from entering into the same league. Adrastus was told, he need only give the necklace to Eriphyla, (Amphiaræus's wife) which Polynices had brought from Thebes, and which had been dedicated to harmony, to prevail on Amphiaræus to make one in the expedition. Adrastus obeyed the advice, and Eriphyla, charmed with the beauty of the necklace, promised to engage her husband; for that depended only on her, Amphiaræus having sworn to obey his wife in every thing.

Ver. 298. *Found a son.*] Alcmeon was the son of Amphiaræus; the father, on his departure for Thebes, strictly charged his son, who was then very young, that when he came to age, he should revenge his death by killing his mother. Alcmeon obeyed these orders very punctually: several of the poets represented this story in tragedy; and this murder of Eriphyla by Alcmeon, the ancients saw with great pleasure acted on their stages.

NOTES upon the THIRD ACT.

Ver. 1. *For joy, my dearest.*] Chrysothemis having been at her father's tomb to offer her own and sister's hair thereon, meets with the libations there, which had been poured by Orestes, and by them suggests he was returned to Argos: for that Clytemnestra had not offered them, nor yet Electra, nor Chrysothemis, and therefore it must be Orestes.

Ver. 24. *With streams of milk.*] The libations which they made at a sepulchre, consisted for the most part of honey, and milk, and wine: upon which they sometimes sprinkled barley-flower. The manner of using these liquors, was to go round the monument; and pour out some, as they went, out of a bottle (*λύσαις ἀσυνδν*, as Euripides says in his *Electra*) and as they offered, they used certain speeches and prayers to the ghosts of the dead to be propitious to them: and therefore those *χοαί*, or libations, were usually termed *ἡδυνήγιοι*, and *δελιήγιοι*.

Ver.

NOTES UPON ELECTRA. 59

Ver. 26. *And all the flowers*] The custom of strewing flowers about the grave seems rather in honour of the manes, than any ways propitiatory. They sometimes wove them into garlands before they presented them, and this was *σεφανῆν τὴν τύμβον*, a crowning of the tomb. These garlands were called *ἐσώτες*, either from their expressing love; or from *ἔσαν*, because composed of a collection of flowers; or lastly, because they were thrown *ἐπὶ τὴν ἔσαν*, upon the earth. The reason of it, says the scholiast upon Euripides, was *πρὸς τὸ τιμᾶν αὐτὸ μέλαφορῶς τῶν νικούντων*, to honour the dead as they used to do the living when they won the games.

NOTES upon the FOURTH ACT.

Ver. 10. *But aged Strophius.*] He was king of Phocis, and father of Pylades. But after all, why must Orestes and his governor vary in their story? Orestes himself comes from Strophius, but he charges his governor to say, he is a Phocian, and sent from Phanoteus, *παρ' ἀνδρὸς Φανολέως ἤκων*, if I do not misunderstand this passage; for the scholiast says, *πρότερος δὲ ὄνομα φασὶ τὸ Φανολέως*; that Phanoteus was said to be the name of a city; if this be so, I indeed have erred; but there is a second place, which, I believe, will justify my construction, ver. 672. *Φανολεύς δ' Ὀφαιεύς*, says the governor, Phanoteus the Phocian: for Sophocles could never mean the governor should say, the Phanotean, the Phocian, which he must do, if Phanoteus were a city.

Ver. 39. *A torch to kindle up.*] For it was customary for the pile to be lighted by some of the dead person's nearest relations or friends; who did it with their faces turned from the pile, to shew themselves averse to so mournful an office. So at Misenus's funeral in Virg.

—*Subjēctam more parentum
Aversū tenuēre facem.*

Ver. 108. *By all the honours.*] The original has it, *μή, πρὸς γενέε, &c.* *Do not I conjure you by your chin or beard*: but the conjuration would seem very trivial and burlesque to us, however venerable amongst the antients.

That

60 NOTES UPON ELECTRA.

That it was the custom of old, for suppliants to take hold of the beard of the person to whom they made their entreaty, is evident from Homer,

— Δεξιτερῇ δ' ἄρ' ἐπ' ἀνθερείων· ἑλῶσα
Λισσομένη

And this was one manner of salutation among the Hebrews, as appears by 2 Sam. 20, 9; *And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.*

Ver. 122. *Behold my father's signet.*] Gr. *Μου Φραγίδα πατρὸς*: upon which the scholiasts have commented very variously; Triclinius thus, *τὴν ἐξ ἐλέφαντος ὤμων, ὃν οἱ ἐκ Πέλοπος καταγόμενοι εἶχον. ἕτεροι δὲ φασὶ τὸ Φραγίδα ἀντὶ τοῦ δακτύλιου. The ivory shoulder, which the descendants of Pelops bore; but others say, it is put for a seal.* The third scholiast puts a still different gloss upon it, *Φραγίδα ἦν τὴν κατακλῆσαι τὴν προσώπῳ καὶ τὴν λοιπὴν σώματι, τὴν κατὰ πάντα ὅμοιον τῷ ἐμῷ πατρὶ Ἀγαμέμνονι; that is, the make and turn of his face and body, altogether resembling his father Agamemnon.* I have translated it signet; but am not absolutely determined, whether that was the intention of Sophocles. Aristotle takes notice of a remembrance made use of by the poet Carcinus in his *Thyestes*, by the means of a star; but perhaps that remembrance may be much the same as ours, and borrowed from Sophocles: for Robortellus conjectures, and not without great probability, (in Mr. Dacier's opinion,) that instead of the word ἀστὴρ, which signifies a *star*, Aristotle writ ὀστία, which signifies *bones*, and that he means the bone of ivory with which the gods repaired Pelops's shoulder, and which appeared in his descendants.

NOTES upon the FIFTH ACT.

Ver. 4. *The customary banquet.*] Gr. *ἐς τάφον λέβητα κοσμεῖ*, which Mr. Johnson renders, *in fuitus Lebetem adornat*; however I have relied on the words of two of the scholiasts; the latter of which, as containing a full explanation, I shall here transcribe. Ἴστέον ὅτι παρ' ὧν δηλοῖ δύο. τὴν τόπαν μὲν τῷ μνήματι ἐν ᾧ ὁ νεκρὸς

NOTES UPON ELECTRA. 61

νεκρὸς καταλιθεῖται, καὶ ὁ δεῖπνον ὁ ἐπὶ νεκρῷ διὰ παρηγορίαν γινόμενον. ἐνθαῦθα δὲ τὸ ὕψος διήλκοι. ἦγον κοσμεῖ λείψα εἰς τάφον, τελείων κοσμεῖ δεῖπνον εἰς παρηγορίαν. For after the funeral was over, (says Dr. Potter) the company met together at the house of the deceased person's nearest relations, to divert them from sorrow. Here there was an entertainment provided, which was termed *περίδειπνον*, *ὑπὸ δείπνον*, *τάφον*, &c.

Ver. 26. *Crimson sacrifice of Mars.*) i. e. with the blood they had shed. *χεῖρ ῥάξει θυγλῆς Ἀρεῖ*, says Sophocles; and I believe he certainly expresses himself thus, in allusion to the human victims which were on some occasions sacrificed to Mars. Triclinus remarks on this passage thus, ἦγον θυσίας, ἦτοι αἵματι, ὁ θυσία δέχεται Ἀρεῖ. *φιλαίμαλον γὰρ καλεῖται*; that is, with the sacrifice, or blood which Mars receives in sacrifice, for he is termed a lover of blood.

Ver. 68. *But if my words transgress.*] The Greek has it, *εἰ δ' ἔπειτα Νέμεσις*; which, I confess, gave me no small trouble to understand; and unless another passage in this play have helped me to a right conception of them, I shall as freely own myself still in the dark. Clytemnestra in the second act, triumphing on account of Orestes's disaster, Electra cries out,

Ἀχαι Νέμεσις τῷ θανάτῳ ἀρτίως

Avenging goddesses, hear her contumelies!

Upon which Triclinus remarks, *Νέμεσις, διὰ μεμφομένη τις τοῖς θανόντων ἐφ' ὧν ἐξορίας καὶ τέως τιμωρομένη*, i. e. *Nemesis is a goddess who resents and punishes all insults upon the dead.* So Ægisthus, triumphing on the like occasion, stops short; — *but if I err, or shall be punished for it, I say no more.*



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